

ISLAMIC
LAW OF IMITATION
(AL-TASHABBUH FI AL-ISLĀM)

Ḥakīm al-Islām Mawlānā
Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib
Former Rector, Darul Uloom Deoband

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Ḥakīm al-Islām Maulānā Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Foreword

Ḥakīm al-Islām Maulānā Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib Qāsmī, the grandson of Imām Muḥammad Qāsim Nānautavī, was a person of varied skills and versatile character. He was an exceptional scholar, an excellent interpreter of Islam's moderate thought, an outstanding orator, a matchless writer, a wise preacher, a sincere reformer, a remarkable teacher, and an unparalleled debater; all at the same time. He had a pleasant, gentle, and sociable personality, and was equally good when it came to administration and management. After all, he administered Darul Uloom Deoband as its chancellor for more than half a century, and founded and presided over the prestigious organization of Indian Muslims, All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

There is almost complete unanimity on his mastery in oratory and eloquence as well as his prowess as a preacher, reformer, and administrator. Although he could hardly free himself up for writing and authoring due to the piles of responsibilities that were on his shoulder, the pen and paper would always accompany him and he would make use of any opportunity that he could find. This is how he managed to author more than hundred books despite his busy life.

In fact, Ḥakīm al-Islām began writing when he was still a student, and he did not let his relation with the pen and paper to break or weaken at any point of his life. His writings covered a host of subjects, like religion, science, history,

literature, society, culture and civilization. What sets his writing apart is the fact that most of his endeavors delve into difficult and complex topics, but he presents his ideas in such a way that they become a lot easier and interesting for common readers thanks to his simplistic writing style and his depth of knowledge.

There is no doubt that to interpret the moderate Islamic thought – which the Ulema of Deoband are representative of in the Indian subcontinent – is not an easy task. Indeed, it is a double-edged sword. Preaching moderation is easy but practicing it is extremely difficult, because it requires a good balance between knowledge and reason, modernism and traditionalism, religious life and worldly life, rationality and practicality. It also requires refinement of thought, the knowledge and understanding of Islam's core ideology along with all of its requisites and conditions, the awareness of antithetical ideologies, and familiarity with their unique features, their upholders, their originators, and their nerve centers. Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib Qāsmī was the best interpreter of the real Islamic thought at his time. In fact, his books have come to be the criterion to filter out foreign elements from the original ideology of Islam and have acquired the status of authority in this field.

The book in hand is one of the most important works of Ḥakīm al-Islām which discusses one of the most important principles of Islamic Shariah, namely the 'imitation of disbelievers'. The imitation of disbelievers in their beliefs, practices, and behavior is among the major reasons of the downfall of the Muslim Ummah, and most people do not even realize how serious and harmful this malpractice can be. On the one hand, it has removed the aversion to disbelief and practices of disbelievers from the hearts of common Muslims, and on the

other, it has made non-Islamic culture and civilization dearer to Muslim minds thereby weakening their relation with Islam. What is more surprising is the fact that many advocates of this malpractice can be found among Muslims who have tried their best to render the Islamic injunctions concerning the issue of imitation as weak, useless, and impractical. In addition to explaining the stance of Shariah on this matter, Ḥakīm al-Islām has successfully countered and refuted the arguments, objections, and doubts that are often raised against the principle of prohibition of imitation. Therefore, this book has become a reference point and a must-have for every teacher, reformer, and preacher of Islam who seeks to bring back the Muslim Ummah to the original path of Islam and to remodel them on the perfect ideal of Ṣaḥābā and Tābi'ūn.

The translation of such a precious book to English language is indeed a beautiful addition to the academic services of Ḥujjat al-Islām Academy, for which I genuinely congratulate the director of the Academy, Maulana Dr. Mohammad Shakaib Qasmi, for successfully leading the Academy on the path of knowledge and for his efforts in disseminating the legacy of the 'Ulamā of Deoband.

I also congratulate our young scholar and researcher at the Academy, Maulana Anwar Aziz Usmani, for carrying out the uphill task and successfully translating this book into English language which is indeed a result of his dedication, determination, and capability. I ask the Almighty to increase him in knowledge and wisdom, to accept his efforts, and to make it beneficial for the readers. Ameen!

Mohammad Sufyan Qasmi
Rector, Darul Uloom Waqf Deoband

Publisher’s Note

Ḥujjat al-Islām Academy was established with an aim to promote the academic works of Deobandi scholarship. This includes the translation of their important writings into global languages, especially into Arabic and English. So far, by the grace of Almighty, the Academy has translated and published around thirty books and many others are waiting to be published soon.

The academic legacy of the ‘Ulamā of Deoband has garnered interest from across the world specially in recent decades, including from the English speaking world, but since the overwhelming majority of their work is in Urdu language, it was mostly inaccessible for the non-Urdu speakers. So it was the demand of time to translate their work into the most common language of communication, that is, English.

Deobandi scholarship and Deoband school of thought are particularly known for their strict adherence to traditional Islam, depth of knowledge, broadness of mind, moderation of thought, and perfect balance between narration and reason. This distinctive quality of the ‘Ulamā of Deoband is clearly visible in the writings of Ḥakīm al-Islām Maulānā Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib Qāsmī. His books perfectly combine the beauty of diction with soundness of argument. His discussion is neither based on literal and rigid understanding of religious texts nor on purely rational grounds with no link, whatsoever, to religious traditions. Instead, his writings are the perfect blend of traditionalism

and rationalism, religiosity and modernity, as well as profound knowledge and linguistic artistry. This is the reason why Ḥujjat al-Islām Academy has given priority to editing, simplifying, and translating his books in compliance with the contemporary academic standards and research methods.

Al-Tashabbuh fī al-Islām is one of his most prominent and comprehensive works which has covered the issue of imitation from all directions, not leaving any ambiguity or scope for any doubts pertaining to the topic. The laborious task to translate and edit this book was shouldered to our brother and member of our team of researchers, Maulana Anwar Aziz Usmani, who dedicated his time entirely to rephrasing and translating this book. His work is not limited to translating the text alone, but he also carried out the job of editing, referencing, authenticating the citations, and adding additional notes to explain the text where required. He has tried his best to produce the work in accordance to the current academic standards. No doubt, the job that he has undertaken was very demanding and the responsibility attached to it was quite big. Had it not been for the Divine assistance from the Almighty and the dedication and ambition of Maulana Anwar Aziz, the successful completion of the task would have been impossible. May Allah give him its reward from His boundless treasure of mercy.

At last, I feel honored to present this book to our readers. I pray may the Almighty Allah accept this humble effort of us, give it popularity among the readers, and make it beneficial for the author, translator, publisher, and its readers in both worlds. Ameen!

Mohammad Shakaib Qasmi
Deputy Rector Darul Uloom Waqf Deoband &
Director, Ḥujjat al-Islām Academy

Preface

Background of this Work

It is a norm of this world that things which are backed by power and glory appear naturally glamourous and attractive to the world. This is not only true about goodness and virtues, but even evil, vice, and transgression when emerge on the surface of the earth backed by power and status, they become a center of attraction for the masses. On the contrary, being weak, powerless, miserable, and defeated are such destructive qualities that turn even the best of things into insignificant and negligible in most people's eyes.

Islamic civilization which is characterized by simplicity, chastity, contentment, religiosity, devotion, and adherence to the footsteps of the Prophet, when it was abandoned by power and glory due to our own wrongdoings, those who worshipped the glory turned their backs on it. The whole world began to confront the Islamic civilization, thousands of problems befell on it, and it became negligible and inconsiderable for its own people.

The Western civilization, on the other hand, which does not originate from the pathway of any prophet or any sacred source, rather which is rooted in pleasure-seeking, luxuriation, self-indulgence, and bodily comforts, when nourished under the patronage of power and glory, it attained too much charm and glamour. Look how many hearts this artificial beauty has attracted and how many adoring lovers it has made among the young men of Indian soil who will not hesitate to sacrifice their lives and faiths for its sake! They

warmly welcome each and every evil coming from its side just because it holds dominance and supremacy.

This interchange between power and weakness has created a state of collision between East and West, and the clash of the European and Asian civilizations has paved the way for the darkness of the West to overpower the light of the East and to succeed in gripping the hearts of Muslims. Muslims began to prefer this civilization over their religion thereby losing this wealth. It eventually came to be that their majority has totally lost the tracks of their predecessors; Neither they have appearance and bearing of a Muslim nor do they exhibit behavior and morals of a Mu'min. Neither their foreheads shine like the foreheads of holy men nor do their faces resemble the faces of pious people. They do not dress up like righteous men or behave like God-fearers. Rather, Western thought and custom, egoist appearance, arrogant behavior, unislamic attire, and abominable attitude have replaced those values. As if the footprints of those misguided nations who were left far behind by Muhammad's prophethood have now – after thirteen centuries – become the criterion of progress and prosperity instead of the excellent example of the Prophet. The idealizing and imitation, which should have been of the Ulema and righteous men of this Ummah, have been directed to materialistic nations of the world.

Moreover, the evil of imitating those nations did not remain restricted to the practical side alone, rather its adverse effects have reached the realm of knowledge. The hearts have lost their ability to distinguish right from wrong and things which were disapproved in the past are now fully acceptable.

In fact, the Muslim Ummah has started to see the imitation of disbelievers and Jews and Christians not only acceptable but as something commendable. To shape this

public opinion, thousands of organizations and unions are being formed by the enemies of Allah, the enemies of the Prophet, and the enemies of righteous people of knowledge. Newspapers and magazines are convincing people that no product of the Western civilization – whether it is related to clothing or adornment, lifestyle or decoration – is incompatible with Islam, rather its products are in complete agreement with the values and objectives of the religion.

Basically, these attempts are aimed at forming a society which will hold the label of Islam but will lack its true spirit. If such vile attempts continue for some more time, the real face of Islam may get distorted, the beauty of its values may disappear, and both theoretical and practical traces of an Islamic society may fade away.

In the wake of such corruption and adversity and in the times of such confusion and disbelief, I had an impulse out of my sincerity and goodwill to write something on the matter of imitation up to my capacity in order to elucidate this subject from rational and religious point of views and to bring people back to the original form of Islam and the pathway of the prophets which people have abandoned making their own ways. So, I begin writing putting my trust in divine assistance.

My Approach in the Book

Owing to the abundance of its roots and branches, the matter itself was utmost important and wide-reaching, and then having been on the receiving end of numerous objections from modern young minds, it was exposed to many new aspects of research and investigation. I, On the other hand, having completely dedicated myself to teaching and learning, was totally unqualified for writing on the subject, and the lack of knowledge and expertise and the inherent indolence on top of that proved to be additional obstacles to freeing up myself for

this important task. This book is nothing but a compilation of scattered thoughts and readings jotted down at different occasions. With the assistance of Almighty, this treasure trove was gradually composed in two volumes. The first volume which deals with principles and fundamental concepts of imitation is in your hands. The second volume which comprises secondary discussion on imitation organized in the style of juristic books will be, by Allah's will, presented soon.

The arguments on imitation collected in these volumes were originally scattered in the following books: *Aḥsan al-Siyar* and *Aḥkām bi al-Ghayr* of Al-Dimyāṭī, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* of Shāh Waliullāh, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* of ibn Taymiyyah, *Kashf al-Kurbat 'an Aḥwāl Ahl al-Ghurbat* of Ibn Rajab Ḥanbali, and some of the books of my grandfather Maulāna Qāsim Nānautavī. Although *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* is on the same topic, the ideas therein are scattered like pearls and the stream of Ibn Taymiyyah's knowledge does not flow in a single direction, rather it meanders through different streamlets of science and art. I, therefore, sought to organize these pearls in an orderly manner and to connect these ideas in a single chain so that they become easily accessible and comprehensible for every seeker of knowledge.

It is advisable for the seekers of reality to visit this treasure trove even if only for the change of taste, just as they benefit from various sources of knowledge. I advise them to have a glance at this treasure; but not a cursory glance, rather a thoughtful and contemplative one, so that they could grasp with ease the conclusive wisdoms and complex realities that cannot be apprehended without full attentiveness.

I do not claim that this write-up will bring a prompt revolution to the lives of this nation, as this is against the laws

of nature. Especially, when the task at hand is inviting people to the straight path; a task that proved to be challenging even for the prophets of Allah. Nevertheless, it is just a noble seed that I am trying to sow in the hearts hoping that it will one day bear fruit, revolutionize the thought process, and be irrigated with the purity of words and deeds.

It must be noted that the purpose of this write-up is not to constrain the horizon of minds or to suppress the enthusiasm of the nation, rather it is a call to the Muslim Ummah to embrace, as a nation, the qualities of self-respect, self-reliance, dignity, prestige, religious fervor, and autonomy, so that the zeal for preserving their national symbols and religious identity awakens in them and, consequently, their communal structure is saved from falling apart. It is because the communal life can never be set forth unless its foundation is laid upon the distinct features of that community.

A community that does not have its distinct existence does not stand on its own foundation, and this is why it lacks longevity and durability and is prone to disrespect and mockery by others. Every sane person will definitely regard such community as the killer of self-respect and dignity, and the enemy of the religion and nation.

At the end, I conclude my preface with a request that whoever wants to express his views on this matter, or whoever intends to write a genuine and academic criticism of this book with pure intention and sincerity, he should not form his opinion by merely looking at one particular issue, rather he should have a comprehensive look at all the contents of the book and then shape his perspective keeping in view the overall purpose of the book and the objectives of the religion of Islam as a whole which are reflected from these issues. Otherwise,

one may come across a particular issue and conclude that it has been dealt with very rigid and unnecessarily rigorous and strict approach. But when the same issue will be considered along with its parallels, the overall purpose and underlying intentions will become clear, and then the same strictness, which previously seemed rigorous and rigid, will now appear as a completely rational and insightful principle, and one will begin to regard it as the dividing line which is necessary to protect the national identity.

The readers are reminded that the compiler of this book is a non-scholar who lacks the knowledge and expertise required to write on this subject. There is high possibility that the readers would find in it plenty of errors and shortcomings. They are humbly requested to excuse me for any shortcoming and deficiency that they run into and inform me of the same.

Mohammad Tayyib
(Darul Uloom Deoband)

Introduction

الحمد لله رب العالمين والعاقبة للمتقين والصلاة والسلام على رسوله محمد وعلى آله وأصحابه وأزواجه وذرياته وأتباعه اجمعين، أما بعد:

The Law of Change

The world has witnessed hundreds of laws and thousands of legislations throughout the course of history. But there is one law that has never ever gone through any change or alteration; the law of change itself. Nothing in this world – tangible or intangible, qualitative or quantitative – is saved from the manipulation of this change and alteration. This law never let time and temporals, space and spatials to stay stationary on a single pattern or a single condition.

Look at the earth and what is contained within it! You will find it controlled by the contrasting rules of construction and destruction, uprise and collapse, modification and rearrangement, death and survival.

Look at the sky and what is contained within it! You will find it governed by the principles of transformation and revolution, arrival and departure, movement and rotation, turning and spinning.

Humankind, who claims to be the noblest of all creations, even its members – whether single or in group – and their situations – be it individual or communal – were not spared from drastic changes of time; the norm of rise and fall, ascent and descent.

At times, when this unjust and ignorant human rises to the pinnacle of success, he even surpasses heavenly angels, and at others, when the same righteous and pious human steeps to the lowest level of disgrace and despicability, even the most degraded and debased things of this world seem superior to him.

This is what the Holy Quran proclaims:

> We have certainly created man in the best of stature; Then We return him to the lowest of the low. [At-Tīn: 4-5]

The Persian poet Saadi Shirazi says:

گہے بر طارم اعلیٰ نشینیم   گہے بر پشت پای خود نبینیم

> [Translation: I am sometimes sitting in high heaven. Sometimes I cannot see the back of my foot]

In other words, humankind, despite being the best of creations, could not escape from this eternal law of change. The revolutionary nature and rapid momentum of time have ever been bringing about dramatic changes and rolling the sphere of this world like a child plays with ball. How many tyrants, who for long oppressed the creation of God, were subdued! How many of those crowned with respect and glory were brought down to humiliation and misery!

When the glowing side of the time unveils itself, it rises the status of the dog of the people of the cave (*aṣḥāb al-kahf*) to be equivalent to human beings, and when the same time shows its dark and ugly side, the son of one of the most prominent prophets, Noah (may peace be upon him), enters the circle of the people of hellfire and becomes a blot on the Prophet's family.

پسر نوح با بدان بنشست   خاندان نبوتش گم شد
سگ اصحاب کہف روزے چند   پئے نیکان گرفت و مردم شد

> [The son of Noah became a friend of wicked persons. His race of prophets became extinct. The dog of the companions of the cave for some days associated with good people and became a man.]

Then, it is not limited to individuals alone, but all the preceding and succeeding nations of this world have submitted and will continue to submit to this law of change and process of renewal. Countless ambitious nations emerged on the surface of the earth with power and glory and dazed the world with their might, but then the law of change got the best of them and they were vanquished not to rise ever again.

There were nations who boasted "Who is greater than us in strength?" [Quran, 41:15]. There were nations who penetrated mountains, as if they were made of wax, and carved houses right into the rocks with their extraordinary skills. They "built it up more than they have built it up." [Quran, 30:9] There were nations whose matchless intellectual and practical legacy is startling the world even today. These nations are the likes of ʿĀd, Thamūd, People of Midian, and People of Chaldea. They ruled the world with full authority and sovereignty, and dominated it through development and inventions. But once the sense of superiority overcame them and they were blinded in arrogance, greed, and moral corruption, then according to the habit of Allah the same law of change came into effect and erased their prestige and glory leaving no trace of them on the face of the earth.

> Then do you see of them any remains? [Quran, 69:8]

> Do you perceive of them anyone or hear from them a sound? [Quran, 19:98]

In short, numerous peoples and nations came to settle in this world, sat successively on the throne of power and glory, and then left this world after being defeated by the law of change, vacating the throne for their successors.

> And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people. [Quran, 3:140]

The Law of Change and the Muslim Ummah

The Muslim Ummah could also not escape from the manipulation of the law of change. Look! and take heed of its effect on this glorious nation (Muslim Ummah) which has been rightfully named the best of nations. There was a time when every single member of this Ummah was an embodiment of success and good fortune and a living example of self-esteem and dignity. Their parallels were nowhere to be found as they were unique in their own ways. Their name was enough to give other nations the shiver, to make emperors tremble, and to fill the hearts of arrogant tyrants of the world with horror; because the power and glory were under their feet, victory was in front of them, and they were progressing towards success knocking down failure and demotion.

But what happened after all this success and glory? The members of the same brilliant nation have turned into dark-hearted, frustrated, and unambitious lot, like us. We are the kind of humans who are demeaning humanity and undermining moral standards. Our future is embarrassed in front of our past. Alas! The nation whose goblets were always full of wine, is now running dry.

When good times casted their shadow over this nation, it rose to such a high degree of self-esteem and self-reliance that it, with extraordinary strength of ambition, overthrew Caesar and Khosrow (Qaisar and Kisra), displaced great rulers of the

world, and changed the map of the entire globe. On the other side, when the same nation was hit by bad times, it became so worthless and deprived of dignity that now the world has overpowered it and changed its fate.

> The scale is in the hands of the Most Merciful,
> he uplifts some people and lowers others.(1)

Both past and present of this glorious nation are in front of our eyes. On the one hand, we have the picture of its past which is full of peace and contentment, success and prosperity, prestige and magnificence, and it was not even very long ago in the history. On the other hand, we have its present before us which is characterized by deadly storms, destructive tremors, and never-ending chaos coming upon this nation.

It is extremely shocking to see how a high-flying, flourishing, and rapidly progressing nation is pushed back in no time by the manipulation of time, and how a robust, hardy, and fit as a flea nation falls so deep into the pit of weakness, deterioration, and varying illnesses that its present in no way resembles its past.

The two contrasting periods of this Ummah are before us, and we are contemplating varying stages of this startling change; the rise and fall, progress and regress, ebb and flow, success and failure, in order to identify the cause of this adversity and to diagnose the root of this illness.

Diagnosis of the Illness of this Ummah

When we took up the responsibility to diagnose the illness of this Ummah and to identify the causes of its misery, we realized

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(1) Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, edited: Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1990), vol.2, p317, Hadith number: 3141.

that we are not alone in this field. Rather, we found hundreds of masterminds and people of exceptional intellect exhausting their geniuses in the same endeavor. The example of this Ummah is like a patient whose illness spread throughout his body, disabled all of his organs, and rendered him totally incapacitated, and he is surrounded by professional physicians and specialist doctors who have come together to detect the root cause of the illness and find the ways to get rid of the disease and completely cure the Ummah.

Every physician identified the cause of illness as per his line of thought and personal inclination, and prescribed a remedy accordingly. Someone pointed out poverty and financial distress as the real culprit and proposed that the Ummah should become wealthy and, in order to be so, it should readily use all the means of accumulating wealth including dealing with usury and interest-based banking. In short, every well-wisher of the Ummah put forth his sincere suggestion and expressed his opinion on the cause of disease and its remedy. But the truth is that none of them could reach the reality.

Such shallow and superficial views could only touch the surface of the problem but failed to recognize the root cause of the illness. They saw poverty, subservience, ignorance, hypocrisy, and other such characteristics as visible causes of the downfall. But they could not comprehend that these causes are predicaments in themselves, and since every predicament originates from a cause, the question here is what is that cause? And what is in the crux of these causes which is bringing about such disasters?

We agree that poverty is a cause of downfall, but then what caused this poverty? We admit that subservience is deadly for any nation, but how come their sovereignty was replaced by subservience? Everyone knows that ignorance

and hypocrisy are the causes of dishonor and disgrace, but through which door did these traits found their way into this nation? No doubt, idleness creates mental disturbance and deliriousness, but the question is why did idleness put an end to their productive activities?

In fact, none of the physicians could detect the hidden enemy which is the real culprit and the root cause of all the illnesses. So, when their diagnosis could not pass the test, there is no question of their prescription being feasible, and when diagnosis and prescription both are unreliable, how could we expect the healing? This is the reason why with every passing day, the patient is getting further from the healing and closer to death.

All in all, since all the attempts of these outward physicians have so far been unable to give a positive result, let us turn to those spiritual physicians who, being enlightened by the Almighty God, are aware of hidden and invisible causes of the illness, and are qualified to identify the root cause of any complicated disease with utmost ease. Those who have revived many nations that were on the verge of death but, by virtue of their successful treatment, they began to enjoy a new life. Especially, let us turn to the treatment of the greatest spiritual physician, Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, whose accurate treatment resurrected the ignorant people of Arab who were at the bottom-most of ignorance, poverty, hypocrisy, discords, and slavery of desires. They were neither obedient to Allah nor respectful to his creation. Neither they had faith in God nor were they well-behaved. Their rude behavior and treacherous nature had transformed their kins into strangers, and strangers into enemies. They had ruined their religious and practical, physical and spiritual, family and civil lives due to maximum

ignorance, foolishness, hypocrisy, discords, immorality, and bad deeds. In fact, they were more like animals than human beings.

At the time of such adversity, that holy physician, with his effective treatment, brought this drowning nation out of the calamity, helped it sail through the storm to its destination, and restored its health after cleansing it of all the infectious diseases.

چونکہ آید او، حکیم حاذق است   صادقش دان کہ امین وصادق است
در علاجش سحر مطلق را ببین   در مزاجش قدرت حق را ببین

[Translation: When he comes, he is a skilled physician: deem him veracious, for he is trusty and true.

In his remedy behold absolute magic, in his temperament behold the might of God!]

The Prophetic Treatment

Look at the spiritual treatment of the Prophet (PBUH)! He, in his very first address to his people after being appointed for prophethood, did not say that 'O people! The poverty has brought you to the verge of destruction, so accumulate the wealth.' Neither he established banks for usurious dealings and loan-sharking in order to acquire wealth, nor did he lay foundation of some schools and colleges or used false propaganda tactics through posters and advertisements. Rather, he proposed a very easy and simple treatment.

He said: O people! You all are sick and I am the healthiest among you, even healthier than those who have passed and those who will come. I am a man of balanced temperament, moderate actions and behavior, and pure spirituality. Therefore, whoever among you is eager for recovery and health, he should seek to be like me; his speech

should be like my speech, his actions should be like my actions, his worship should be like my worship, and his habits should be like my habits. In short, he should try to imitate my life throughout his own life. In fact, the more one inwardly and outwardly imitates me, the more his spiritual and physical health will improve. It is because I have been sent down to be the ideal for the world in terms of spiritual health and physical purity and to be the embodiment of divine wisdom, conduct, and perfection. Following my footsteps is the only way to recover from all sort of deceases.

He also informed them that: I have brought for you the most effective formula to cure the hearts, the Holy Quran. But the only way to benefit from it is to follow my example, for the knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Quran are manifested in my conduct and behavior, and the definitive guidelines for humanity hidden in the semantics of the Quran are revealed on my soul and materialize through my actions in the form of observable events. In other words, there are two types of Quran; one is theoretical which I speak through revelation, and the other is practical which I am myself. So, I am the personified description and practical solution of the Quran. I and the Quran are not two distinct entities rather two aspects of the same reality. The Holy Book comprises words and expressions of knowledge, and I contain their meanings and implications. Therefore, my words are the teachings of Quran and my actions are its practical forms.

> "The character of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was the Qur'an".[2]

(2) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, edited by: Shu'ayb al-Arnawūṭ, Adil Murshid et al. (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 2001), vol.42, p183, Hadith number: 25302.

> (It was said by Siddiqah Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet (PBUH), when she was asked about his character.)

I have been sent down to show the perfect model and excellent practical example of the Quran, so that the sick world could learn the use of the Quranic formula by looking at my example.

Admittedly, just as the Quran was a book inclusive of knowledge and wisdom, the personality of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was inclusive of its practical solution. There is no aspect of life whose desirable practical model he has not shown through his actions. Whether it is about appearance or behavior, customs or worship, ethics or morals, culture or civilization, love or animosity, travel or stay, war or peace, eating or drinking, sleeping or awakening, or any other aspect of life, the excellent models of which were concealed as theories in the semantics of the Quran, he demonstrated their implications through his actions and informed us about the correct and incorrect ways to practice them. He told us the good way of life from the bad, and righteous from sinful.

In short, the treatment he prescribed for those affected with the decease of ignorance was to imitate his life and to lead their lives totally in accordance to his. Being the epitome of divine characteristics, his life is the touchstone to differentiate between right and wrong, virtue and vice. Quran proclaimed this fact in the following verse:

> There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah for the one who has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah profusely. [Al-Aḥzāb, 33:21]

This treatment indeed has an impressive healing power. As soon as the barbarians of Arab turned to the messenger of Allah to seek guidance for all the theoretical and practical aspects of their lives, made their beliefs, practices, intentions, and actions compliant to those of the Prophet, and shaped their lives according to the divine model and the exemplar of holy character, they left the rest of the world far behind in terms of knowledge, power, civilization, and superiority. In theology, they became envy of philosophers. With respect to the knowledge of divine essence and attributes, they were cognizant of the reality. When it came to physics and logic, they outweighed the kinds of Aristotle and Plato. In the matters of ethics and worship, knowledge of this world and the hereafter, dealings and politics, they surpassed all the experts and intellectuals of their respective fields.

It was due to these ambitious people that the Islamic Arabian civilization outshined the civilizations of the East and West, and put the Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and Chinese civilizations in the shade, forcing them to hide their faces in the darkness of temples, churches, synagogues, and other places of worship. Go and explore the libraries of the world! Browse through the pages of books and encyclopedias! You will find that wherever there is an iota of civilization and decency, it is a gleam of the Arabic enlightenment. You will also realize that on the one side, the world is frightened by the name of Islam, and on the other, it has no option but to glean from its treasure trove. When the Arabs shaped their behavior and character in accordance to the divine model, they reached such high degree of good moral, bravery, generosity, sense of honor, truthfulness, patience, forbearance, honesty, trustworthiness, contentment, trust in Allah, and fulfillment of promises that they brought tyrants of the world into their subjugation. They received so

much admiration and popularity that the world began to value their sweat over the blood of their own. Their moral, cultural and economic advancement surpassed all the borders and earned global acclaim.

Overall, it was the result of this imitation and compliance with the Prophetic Model that the same period which was earlier called 'the period of ignorance' due the sick individuals was now named as 'the best period' thanks to the pious and just living of *Ṣaḥāba* (the companions of the Prophet). This period came to be known as the noblest era and the golden age in the world history owing to religiosity and spirituality of this community and their sincere ambitions and actions. The same sick individuals who were unable to even move their bodies, now became so fit and healthy that they not only swayed but overturned the whole world.

A contemplative look at this dramatic change in the state of Arabs will reveal that they had a complete shift from one state to another. Admittedly, the state from which they were removed was the state of illness, otherwise there would not be a need to remove that, and the state to which they were brought was the state of healing, or else it would be useless to bring them to this state. Undoubtedly, the state which was taken away was essentially characterized with mind-wandering, excessive freedom of beliefs and practices, and not being bound with one divine model, and the state which was enshrine in them was strict adherence to the heavenly model. Keeping this deadly decease of ignorance and its successful treatment into account, it is not hard to conclude that adhering to a divine model, in terms of beliefs and practices, is the key to spiritual health, and turning away from it to a heedless life or following man-made patterns of life are the biggest causes of spiritual illness.

فکر خود ورای خود در عالم رندی نیست
کفر است در این مذهب خود بینی و خود رایی

[Translation: In the world of profligacy (of being a lover of God), is neither thought of self, nor opinion of self: In this religious order, Kufr is self-seeing and self-opinioning.]

After bearing this in mind, it is not hard to conceive that poverty, subservience, strife, dispute, ignorance, and illiteracy are not the real reasons behind our current state. Rather, the only reason behind all these deadly causes is that we have left the path of the Prophet and have stopped following his way of life. Our appearance and conduct are now based on self-made fashion instead of Prophetic model. In place of strict adherence, unrestricted freedom of thought has occupied our minds. On top of that, we did not only leave the habit of abidance but also got rid of its idea. This is the reason why, in complete contrast to the early days of Islam, we find ourselves surrounded with signs of weakness, helplessness, humiliation, and defeat.

When we did not hold fast to the exemplars of our early age, we were naturally deprived of their blessed effects. Had we strictly followed our righteous predecessors in our conduct, appearance, love for Prophet, and compliance to his model, we would genuinely be reaping the same benefits as they did and the world would be giving us the same glorification as it did to them. But since we did not retain those examples, the glory and prestige – which were its natural effects – have also abandoned us. Even today, if we bring back the same virtues which were bestowed on those blessed personalities, we may reclaim the same achievements that once startled and petrified the world.

Consequently, we have to admit that success and advancement of the Muslim nation lie in modelling themselves on the predecessors and imitating them both inwardly and outwardly. It was this imitation and compliance to the Prophetic model that led the early generations of Muslims to the path of righteousness, success, victory, and global dominance. Even today this imitation and compliance have the potential to lead this nation to the same path. Otherwise, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that this nation – God forbid – may return to the same era of ignorance in which they were living before arrival of the Prophet.

How accurate is what Imām Malik said: The latter part of this Ummah will not be rectified except by that which rectified its earliest part.(3)

In brief, the Prophetic model is the sole criterion of good and bad, honor and disgrace in our individual as well as collective lives. It is the only effective treatment for all the visible and invisible diseases. Therefore, if we want to reclaim our prestige, then instead of going forward, we need to go fourteen centuries back, put the yoke of abidance around our neck, and pick the path of obedience over innovation.

This significance of compliance and obedience has been pronounced by the Holy Quran in the following words:

> There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah for the one who has hope in Allah and the Last Day. [Al-Aḥzāb, 33:21]

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(3) ‘Abd Allāh bin Muḥammad al-Ghunaymān, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Tawḥīd min Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Medina: Maktabah al-Dār, 1405H), vol.2, p174.

In another verse, the Holy Quran commanded to abide by the theoretical and practical exemplar of the Prophet.

> Accept whatever the Messenger gives you, and refrain from whatever he forbids you. [Al-Ḥashr, 59:7]

The Prophet (PBUH) asserted the same meaning in one of his sermons:

> The best of the speech is embodied in the Book of Allah, and the best of the guidance is the guidance given by Muhammad. And the most evil affairs are their innovations; and every innovation is error.(4)

At another occasion, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> Whoever protected my Sunnah, Allah the Exalted will honor him with three characteristics: He will place his love in the hearts of righteous, his fear in the hearts of the wicked ones, ampleness in his provision, and uprightness in his religion.(5)

Imām Zuhri said: "Holding fast to Sunnah is the key to salvation."(6)

Imām Malik said: "The Sunnah is like the Ark of Noah. Whoever boards it will be saved, and whoever does not board it will drown."(7)

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(4) Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, The Book of Friday, 7:867.

(5) Ismā'īl Ḥaqqī, Rūḥ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), 2: 231.

(6) Aḥmad bin Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, edited by: Muhammad Ziya al-Rahman al-A'zami (Kuwait: Dar al-Khulafā' li al-Kitāb al-Islāmi, n.d.), vol.1, p454.

Then, the Quran warned of great trials in this world and extreme torment in the hereafter for those who dissent from this obedience and compliance. Allah said:

> Let those who go against the order (of the Messenger) beware lest a trial or severe punishment afflict them. [An-Nūr, 24:63]

In another place, those who go against the Messenger of Allah and leave the path of the Muslim masses have been warned of hellfire.

> As for him who sets himself against the Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers even after true guidance had become clear to him, We will let him go to the way he has turned to, and We will cast him into Hell - an evil destination. [An-Nisā', 4:115]

At one place, the Quran cautioned that feeling annoyance over judgements of the Prophet (PBUH) might lead to complete loss of faith.

> But no, by your Lord, they cannot become true believers until they seek your arbitration in all matters on which they disagree among themselves, and then find not the least vexation in their hearts over what you have decided, and accept it in willing submission. [An-Nisā', 4:65]

At another place, it proclaimed that no one can use his freedom of opinion in a matter in which Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) have already given a decision.

> It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by

(7) Abul Qāsim Ibn al-'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, edited by: 'Amr bin Gharāmah al-'Umrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), vol.14, p9.

> Allah and His Apostle to have any option about their decision. [Al-Aḥzāb, 33:36]

And ultimately, the Prophet (PBUH) who is the true interpreter of Quran summarized these verses in his coherent and concise words:

> None of you [truly] believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought[8].

As the Persian poet says:

کہ ہیچش کنارہ نیست بحریست بحر عشق

آنجا جز آن کہ جان بسپارند چارہ نیست

> [The sea of love is a sea that has no shore.
> There, you can only give up your soul.]

In short, when the life of the Prophet (PBUH) turned out to be the only benchmark for right and wrong in all facets of human life, it is impossible for any action that does not comply with the divine model and does not imitate the Prophetic pattern to meet acceptance of God, no matter if it represents an outstanding culture and civilization, demonstrates an exceptional form of etiquettes and conduct, or portrays perfect devotion and ascetic life. As long as it does not adhere to the excellent example of the Prophet, it will never win divine approval. In other words, the only way to obtain acceptance of God is to adopt the same pattern of life as given by the Prophet (PBUH). Every other pattern, aside from that, is dangerous and every other path leads to destruction.

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(8) Abū Bakr bin Abī ʻĀṣim, *Al-Sunnah*, edited by: Muḥammad Nāṣiruddīn al-Albānī (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1400 AH) vol.1, p12, Hadith no. 15.

آنکس کہ شد تابع امر تو قد نجا

وانکہ خلاف رائے تو دور شد قد ھلک

[Whoever followed your command, attained salvation. And whoever went against your order, is ruined.]

This compliance and adherence to the Prophetic model is what we term as "imitation of prophets" and slightest departure from this model to any other pattern of this world is called "imitation of others" which will be the subject matter of our discussion. I feel very fortunate that I have been blessed with the opportunity to elaborate on such a fundamental principle of Islam which serves as the sole criterion to identify the causes of rise and fall of the Muslim Ummah as well as to judge their acceptance or non-acceptance in the eyes of God. It is such a broad topic that it covers entire body of the teachings of Islam.

Chapter One

The Concept of Imitation from Logical and Islamic Perspectives

This chapter contains six sections:

Section one: The origin of the concept of imitation

Section two: The reality of imitation from logical and empirical perspectives

Section three: Nations of the world and the secret of their survival

Section four: Imitation of non-Muslims in Islamic texts and traditions

Section five: Is Islam only based on opposition of disbelievers?

Section six: Degrees of imitation from juristic viewpoint

Section One: The Origin of the Concept of Imitation

It is an established fact that Islam is a complete, comprehensive, and unchangeable code of life. All the aspects of life which no other religion of the world could encompass, the religion of Islam perfectly encircle them all in its fold.

> This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. [Al-Mā'idah, 5:3]

Islam did not leave any single detail – be it primary or secondary – untouched for its seekers. It is safe to say that it has, with utmost comprehensiveness, cherry-picked all the beneficial and virtuous elements and the means of success of both worlds that were out there, leaving nothing for other bodies of law except detriment, loss, deprivation, and failure. This is the reason why with the expansion of knowledge, religious societies of the world are being attracted to this center of perfection.

As a result, we find that on the one side, intellectuals and thinkers of Europe are compelled to admit its truthfulness, and on the other, Hindus and Aryans of the East are leaving idol-worship and embracing the absolute monotheism of Islam. So, now that the beauty and perfection of Islam has forced even its opponents to garner fruits of its everlasting benefits, can anyone in the sane state of mind think that it would suggest its adherents to adopt any element of other imperfect civilizations? Or it would not try to stop its followers from embracing other cultures? Never! With the arrival of Islam, the whole theoretical and practical framework of Western as well as Eastern nations has been proved to be either faulty or harmful for the spiritual life.

In fact, the rulings of these rejected nations (whether they are related to belief or practice, society or economics), on grounds of their harmful and faulty nature, can be classified into three categories:

1- The first category is of such rulings that Islam has explicitly declared as 'abrogated' (*mansūkh*) as they were no longer relevant to the spiritual temperament of contemporary world. Apparently, abiding by such rulings after the advent of Islam would have led to many spiritual and physical harms. If these rulings were still beneficial and capable of curing illnesses of today's humans, there would be no need of replacing them with new remedies.

2- Second category is of such innovations and fabrications that were added to religion by Christian Monks, Jewish Rabbis, and other clergymen under their zeal for worship and extreme religiosity which caused them to impose self-made restrictions on the devotees of those religions.

3- Third category is of such matters which have not been abrogated precisely, but since the general body of those rules was prone to alteration, abrogation, addition and subtraction (and that is why it was abrogated in the first place), these matters were also prone to addition and subtraction, which is an indication of their imperfection and flaws. It goes without saying that adhering to such flawed model of life means leaving ourselves incomplete and flawed.

Evidently, since Islam proposed highly beneficial, complete, unchangeable, and irrevocable set of rules and practices as opposed to incomplete, flawed, and harmful rules and practices of other religions, only Islam has the right to emphasize protecting its adherents from those harmful elements of other religions. Having its own flawless culture and tradition, only Islam deserves to give its people the lesson of such strict self-respect that they do not gaze at other nations' faulty traditions. Thus, the Islamic Shariah, in view of its rightful claim over benefit and perfection and faulty and harmful elements of other civilizations, introduced the principle of 'prohibition of imitation' in order to protect the Ummah from external and internal imitation of harmful things of others, or in other words, from mixing the truth with falsehood and benefit with harm. Otherwise, negligence in the matter of imitation or not prohibiting it as a principle would mean that Islam tolerates exchanging perfection for imperfection and buying harm on the cost of benefit, which would in turn be a blot on its comprehensiveness.

In short, if there is any legislation that has the true right to forbid imitation of others, it is only the perfect legislation of Islam. It is as if the concept of imitation was invented for Islam alone.

You can think of the emphasize of Islam on the concept of imitation as an expert doctor who first describes the benefits and harms of all the edibles and then stresses on garnering benefits and avoiding harms. In the same manner, when Islam has already explained that it has encompassed the beneficial aspect of all the things and has left all the harmful aspects for other nations, now it is completely logical for it to insist on its followers to adhere to its

teachings in all matters in order to garner benefits, and to refrain from imitating others in order to avoid harms. Therefore, the objective of Islam behind stopping its adherents from imitating others is not to undermine human sentiments or to limit their liberty, rather it wants these sentiments to be used only in the way that is beneficial and virtuous rather than harmful and evil, for evil and virtue and harm and benefit are two contrasting realities that can never be together; The existence of one of these demands the absence of the other.

If ever-hungry soul of human being is left unattended, in no time it will proceed to worst and harmful provisions depriving itself of beneficial and pure edibles.

If his desperate nature made him consume contaminated aliments of innovation (*bid'ah*) or abrogated rules (*mansūkhāt*), he will definitely be deprived of, or rather begin to hate, the pure and healthy aliments of Prophetic traditions, because when the belly is full, no food is desired not matter how nice it is. This is why the final Prophet (PBUH) said:

> No people introduce an innovation into their religion, except that Allah takes away its like from their Sunnah and then does not restore it to them until the Day of Resurrection.(9)

It is an observed fact that the person who has an inherent tendency towards adultery and obscenity, he is always repulsive to nikah and legal wives; because his carnal

(9) Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Dārimī, *Sunan al-Dārimī*, edited by: Nabīl Hāshim al-Ghumari (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir, 2013), Hadith no. 106.

desire has chosen the path of sin so he avoids the lawful means.

Those who are fond of fictional stories, novels, and legendary tales, they rarely find interest in biographies of prophets, life stories of pious men, and traditions of scholars; because when their interest in history was channeled excessively to a particular way, it lost interest in the other way.

Those who give extreme importance to visiting graves and tombs of pious people to the degree of equating it with obligatory worship, they generally do not attach as much importance to visiting the Bait al-Haram (the sanctified house of Allah) and rites of Hajj; because once their sincere devotion was directed to a specific direction, the other direction was automatically abandoned.

It is commonly observed that those for whom spiritual states and euphoric love of holy men and ecstatic utterances of Sufis (*Shaṭḥiyyāt*) are the reliable sources, they hardly find the complex wisdoms contained in the Book of Allah and the theoretical and practical guidance found in the Prophetic traditions as sufficient proof, rather not even worthy of attention.

Countless of people who consider learning philosophical theories and hair-splitting arguments of Aristotle and Avicenna as the ultimate parameter of success, they seldom show the same passion and enthusiasm in understanding the verses of Quran and the vast ocean of knowledge that it holds.

All these examples prove that every human sentiment – whether it is material or spiritual – has two opposite

aspects of good and evil, beneficial and harmful, and righteous and wicked, and inclination to one aspect results in negligence towards the other. Thus, it is not at all blameworthy for the Shariah that it desires, by prohibiting the imitation of others, to save humankind from harmful effects of different paths and shortcomings of imperfect nations and aims to keep them on one straight, simple, and true path. Owing to its endless mercy, it wants to replace spiritual cuisines of all other religions with that of Islam which serves only purely beneficial and totally harmless delicacies.

> "This Qur'an is the Banquet of Allah. Learn as much as you can from His banquet."[10]

The banquet of Shariah does not only serve the delicacies of religious benefits, but all the cuisines of worldly benefits are also served in a very beautiful manner; because worldly life of a Muslim is not separate from his religious life in the eyes of Islam. Islamic Shariah encompasses all the facets of human life. And considering that the prohibition of imitation encompasses all the aspects of religion, there is no reason to think that any aspect of our worldly life should be left out. Instead, a quick contemplation will reveal that the worldly affairs are more in need of this prohibition compared to religion; because religions of other nations – owing to their evident shortcomings – never attract Muslims that they would tend to their imitation, but it is quite possible that their tendency to imitate shifts from simple and modest lifestyle of Islam (which is founded on God consciousness and God

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(10) Aḥmad bin Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, edited by: Abdul Ali Hamid (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rushd, 2003), vol.3, p333, Hadith no. 1786.

fearing) towards deceivingly vibrant and colorful lifestyle of other nations, which are based on pleasure seeking, self-indulgence, and luxurious living.

Undoubtedly, such glamour of the worldly life often lures simple and immature minds and leads them to neglect the actual purpose of life, i.e. turning towards Allah the Almighty, for which human being was created. These short-sighted minds do not realize that these luxuries are though the source of pleasure and comfort in this world, they are the reason of pain and agony in the hereafter. They do not realize that these materialistic amenities (which are nothing but mediums) sometimes become the barrier for those spiritual matters that have been given the rank of primary objectives by God but those neglectful minds place these objectives in a degree even lower than that of mediums.

I wonder why these silly minds do not see this evident fact that no matter how beautiful and glamorous this materialistic civilization appears to human eyes, it is a product of the same corrupt minds that are filled with disbelief, disobedience, and negligence. Being the king of body, when the heart is dying with the poison of disbelief, its deadly effects on other parts of the body are inevitable. And not only body parts, but the actions and thoughts produced by them are also bound to suffer the same spiritual death. As a poet says:

مجھے یہ ڈر ہے دل زندہ تو نہ مر جائے

کہ زندگانی عبارت ہے تیرے جینے سے

[Translation: I fear, oh my living heart, your death. For, my life depends on your life.]

At this point, it becomes clear that total avoidance from any kind of imitation of disbelievers' lifestyle is necessary for every Muslim who has been gifted, apart from physical eyes, wisdom and farsightedness and who is not at all blind like those who are blinded from seeing the end; Those who are fully indulged in this world and are in total negligence of the hereafter.

> Indeed, these [disbelievers] love the immediate and leave behind them a grave Day. [Al-Insān: 27]

Looking at this blindness, misguidance, and negligence of other nations, Islam has introduced the concept of imitation as a precautionary measure not only in the matters of worship, rather in all affairs of life including civilization, lifestyle, business, and so on. This point will become clearer by the upcoming discussion.

To conclude, the discussion up to this point can be summed up in the following points:

1- "Prohibition of imitation" is the only principle which enables any religion to protect its boundaries from confusion, mixing up, and ultimately from perishing.

2- Among all other religions, Islam is the only religion that has the right to use this principle, as it is the only one that has encircled each and every good, each and every perfection, and each and every benefit. Thus, only its boundaries deserve to be protected from mixing up.

3- Now, it becomes evident that the origin and basis of prohibition of imitation (which is the title of this section) is the perfect and beneficial nature of Islam

as opposed to imperfection and harmful nature of other religions. Had there been any shortfall in Islam, Muslims would have definitely been allowed to adopt and imitate any goodness that they find in other religions. But since this is not the case, there is no scope for any such permission.

And what is there after truth but error? How, then, are you being turned away? [Yūnus: 32]

As a Persian poet says:

خلاف پیمبر کسے رہ گزید   کہ ہر گز بمنزل نخواہد رسید

[Translation: Whoever choses his way against the way of the Prophet can never reach the destination]

After clarifying the significance of the concept of imitation and its origin, we will elucidate in the following section its reality and its effects from logical and empirical point of view. Then, I will rest the case to the readers as to whether it is better to permit imitation or to prohibit it.

Section Two: The Reality of Imitation from Logical and Empirical Perspectives

Everything in this universe has its unique form through which it is identified. Whatever comes in this world, it comes in a particular shape, color, and structure which makes it distinguishable from everything else leaving no confusion. The profound wisdom and limitless power of the Almighty has given everything its most appropriate form and every abstract its most suitable appearance. Therefore, whenever a concealed reality manifests itself, it appears in its exclusive form, and

whenever a veiled secret of the universe reveals itself, it takes its own intrinsic shape. This holds true about all animal species, be it human, lion, horse, or donkey, and about all types of plants, trees, and grass, as well as about all inanimate objects such as stones, bricks, sand, and soil. All these things came to this world along with their distinct forms and shapes on which they were created by the Almighty and through which they are distinguished in this world.

If Zayd appears different from Umar, or a building from another, or a cloth from another cloth, it is certainly on account of their respective and distinct characteristics. That is to say, the picture of a building which we capture in our minds is different from that of another building, and that is how one is distinguished from the other. Similarly, the clothes are distinguished based on their thickness or fineness, smoothness or roughness, and so on. In the same way, we differentiate between Zayd and Umar on the basis of facial features and physical structure of each of the two which are not found in the other.

It was about corporeal beings (*A'yān*). But the situation of abstracts (*A'rāz*) is no different; Each abstract has its unique form and distinct quality; The light is distinct from darkness; The day is illuminated and beautiful while the night is dark and horrific. Same is the situation of colors; Black has different appearance from red and red is distinguishable from green and black. In short, every abstract manifests itself in its exclusive form and expression.

Then, this uniqueness of qualities and characteristics is not limited to particular concepts (*juz'iyyāt*) of the universe alone, but universal concepts (*kulliyyāt*) also derive their existence from their distinct forms and qualities. Every

species, every genus, and every class of being owe their distinct existence to uniqueness of form and characteristic. For example, if we go out looking for a stone, we never return with sand or wood assuming that it is stone; because stone has a definite form through which it is recognized, and this is the reason why we never confuse it with wood, brick, or any other object. In the same manner, we never confuse mango with apple or pomegranate, since the forms and shapes of each fruit are different.

Among living beings, if we are looking for humans, in which form will we look for him? Will we search in the forms of donkey, horse, lion, or any other animal? No! Rather we will search human being only in the form of human, and lion in the form of lion. It is because the lion has its own intrinsic qualities that a human does not have; a predacious nature and distinct appearance, color, and physique, while human has been granted the faculty of reason and sense perception, the power of creativity and innovation, the pleasant quality of cleanliness, adorning oneself with beautiful clothes, consuming variety of delicious food, and the physical charm and attractive appearance; all of which are not given to the lion. This is the reason why human being is different not only from lion, but from all other animal species. If he was deprived of the said internal and external qualities, he would certainly have been same as other animals; senseless and having strange physical features, or just an animate object.

Further, despite being one species, the members of humankind are divided on the basis of gender which is also a result of special characteristics and distinct traits. In reality, men and women are same. Their instinct and nature are also

the same. Yet, there is a striking difference which divides the members of the same species in two categories, gives them distinct names – namely, man and woman – and separates each with different sets of rights and duties. This is the effect of gender specific differences, such as in physical structure, height and size, anatomy and bodily construction, external and internal activities, and behavior and temperament, that in spite of being the same species, both genders have considerable differences. If these gender specific qualities are removed, the distinction between men and women will also disappear and both genders will merge into one.

To sum up, everything between heaven and earth, whether it is living being or non-living being, though created from the same matter and apportioned from the same source of existence, the divine wisdom has bestowed on them different forms and shapes so that they can be recognized from each other, they can be easily distinguished, and everything can fulfil the role and duty assigned to it.

If a member of one species deceivingly assumes the form and appearance of another species, then we will have to associate that member with the new species and not the one it originally belonged to. For instance, let us assume that a donkey somehow manages to adopt the appearance of human being and becomes exactly like a real human, will we still call him a donkey in spite of the beautiful face and human-like physique? Never! He will be called a human instead. Otherwise, what is the reason of calling a human as human if it is not for his appearance?

Let us take another example. An illusionist hides a rope in his basket, moves his wand around it, and after some

time when he opens the basket, we find a live snake instead of the rope. So tell me will it still be called a rope and not snake? No, right? Because both rope and snake have their distinct forms, and if something appears in one of these forms, it will be given the name and treatment associated with that form. Therefore, once the rope assumes the form of snake, it will definitely be called 'snake' rather than the 'rope' and people will definitely be afraid of it just like they are afraid of snake.

To put it briefly, everything that exists in this universe has been given a distinct form and appearance by the Almighty and it can only reveal itself in the shape and with the name of that particular form with which it was created.

> Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form
> and then guided [it]. [Ṭāha: 50]

No matter how keen the world becomes for uniformity, integration, and equality, it can never agree to unification of different forms and shapes of universal realities. Even a lunatic will not want that day and night become the same, light and darkness become identical, and everything in the universe acquires same form, color, and size. In other words, all do not remain all, rather all become one and referring to them as 'all' remains only in the figurative sense. Human and donkey become one and donkey and lion become the same. The mango tree is also the acacia and the same tree is also named rose and jasmine. The same object can be referred to as stone, brick, and cement. Partial and full remain no different. Black and white represent the same color. The earth becomes sky and sky becomes earth. Day and night merge into one reality. In short, there remains no earth, no sky, no day, no night, no white, no black, and no particular or universal concept.

It goes without saying that such merger and integration will result in a new kind of universe in which all that is found will be one unified reality where all types of distinctions and differences will be totally absent. In other words, there will be nothing despite the presence of everything. Subsequently, neither will this new universe require its own components nor the components require the whole of universe. Neither the world will need its diverse and multi-formed constituents nor will the world itself need to be called ‘the world’ or even need to exist. And if it is so, then the logical question is what convinced the Almighty to create, God forbid, such a useless and purposeless universe?

The above elaboration makes it clear that if this material world is left formless and shapeless with no presence of distinctions among its constituents, the world will certainly prove to be meaningless and absurd and it will be a stain on the unexampled power and creation of the Almighty. But if, instead of the unification, the distinction and diversity remain in place as it is and through which everything of this universe is distinguished, then the creation of universe will certainly prove to be an outcome of his countless wisdoms and incomparable example of his perfect power.

Therefore, it becomes evident that unification and integration are the factors that nullify the very existence of the universe, whereas difference and distinction are the qualities that identify and demonstrate everything. Had there been no distinction among various classifications of being, everything in this universe would have been left as nothing and the whole system would have been disrupted.

To conclude, whenever these differences of forms and variations of qualities meet a particular classification of

being, they will come out from obscurity of nothingness to the distinction of existence and will begin to serve the purpose of their creation, as if it is only these distinctions and intrinsic differences that facilitate giving and receiving, teaching and learning, explaining and understanding, happiness and sadness, dealing and trading as well as all those things that relate two humans; because such relations that concern two humans can only come into effect when both are distinguishable from each other. On the other hand, if the distinction of forms and variation of characteristics are removed, then neither particular concepts will remain particular nor universal concepts will remain universal. Instead, the whole universe will convert into one unified reality and it will be totally deprived of various purposes and benefits attached to each of its particular element. Thus, it becomes crystal clear that every entity – be it individual or species – and every quality – be it particular or universal – owe its existence to the same structural differences and distinctions.

Section Three: Nations of the World and the Secret of their Survival

Just like physical and tangible differences, there are some abstract and intangible distinctions. These distinctions have given humankind various abstract forms besides the physical ones and, subsequently, have divided them in a number of groups and nationalities. For instance, there is Muslim nation, Aryan nation, Hindu nation, Christian nation, Jewish nation, and so on. All these nations are although from one father and one mother, they have developed a lot of differences and dissimilarities. Despite being part of one

larger family, they have acquired numerous distinct characteristics.

However, this dissimilarity among the nations is actually based on several individual qualities and nation specific characteristics, since these nations have different customs and habits, different cultures and lifestyles, different sentiments and attitude. So these customs and habits, culture and lifestyle, sentiments and mindset, bearing and demeanor, way of greeting and talking, style of dressing up, manner of eating and drinking are the characteristics that define a group of people as a distinct nation and make each nation distinguishable from the other.

If we consider Asian nations different from European nations (while they all belong to human race), it is solely due to the differences between them in terms of cultural and social life, and sentiments and attitude. This is the dividing line which separates one nation from the other. So, just as physical differences and structural variations draw a borderline between species and other classifications of being, the nation specific characteristics – such as inherent qualities, sentiments, and actions – create distinction among various nations.

Admittedly, the differences found among the nations are also based – to some extent – on ethnic, racial, and territorial divisions, but since these differences are involuntary and not bound by any set of rules and regulations, they are insignificant. Therefore, we have to admit that the basis of division are only spiritual characteristics; because these spiritual qualities are the most powerful distinctions which tend to surpass all the divisions of race, color, ethnicity, and territory, and which serve as the backbone of independent existence of nations.

When these spiritual characteristics are manifested in a certain order, they are given the name of religion and, subsequently, these religious distinctions become the foundation stone for all the varying nationalities. Thus, just like the material world requires particular forms and shapes for physical realities (which include animal beings, plants, and inanimate objects) to appear, the spiritual realm also needs certain forms and distinct appearances for religious and theological realities to manifest. In other words, whenever a religion will emerge, it will appear in its natural form instead of some other artificial forms; because if it appears in some other form, then we will not be able to call it the same religion as the one which was earlier manifested in its original form.

Forms of Pillars of Islam

Now, look at the most comprehensive and all-inclusive religion, Islam, and you will find that it also has a specific form and appearance in the spiritual realm, just like its components and its pillars which make it distinguishable from all other religions. You may take any of its comprehensive departments – such as beliefs, creeds, worship, customs, dealings, politics, ethics, culture, behavior, devotion, and piety – and you will observe that each department manifests itself in a specific form and appearance which makes it distinguishable from its alike and gives it a distinct existence.

The form of Ṣalāh (Namāz) is different from that of fasting and the disposition of Ḥajj is distinct from that of Jihād. It is impossible for the Ṣalāh to manifest itself in the guise of hustle and bustle and armed conflicts, just as it is impossible for Jihād to take shape in the guise of Ṣalāh. The

Ḥajj materializes through a specific set of practices like Iḥrām, Ṭawāf and Sa'ī instead of resting and sleeping. Even the fasting in Islam has a certain method and regulation, so it comes into view through abstinence from eating and drinking as opposed to indulging in carnal desires.

In the same manner, the concealed realities of ethical values – such as generosity, bravery, kindness, forbearance, modesty, and selflessness – and that of unethical behavior which are ingrained in the human nature – such as jealousy, envy, hatred, greed, stinginess and so on – when they emerge through human action, they emerge in their own abstract forms. Stinginess becomes visible through unwillingness to give or spend money, just as generosity is seen through willingness to spend or give. You will never find the innate inclination towards unity coming into sight through violence and bloodshed, just as you will never observe the tendency to conflict materializing through peace and harmony.

You can glance at any business dealing or political affair; you will realize that every contract or transaction has a definite form. The essence of sale or purchase cannot manifest itself in the form of theft and robbery; it has its own form. The realities of marriage and divorce only emerge in their own guise disregarding everything else. Likewise, all the departments of Islamic society are different from other societies and independent in their existence on account of their distinct forms and appearances.

These are the forms of constituents and pillars of Islam marked out by the Shariah. When these constituents are arranged in a sequence, they form the religion of Islam. Just as hand, leg, chest, back, face, facial features, and other body parts when arranged in a certain order, they constitute

the overall shape of human being, in the same way, when distinct appearances of these components of Islam are put together in a certain order, it produces an overall picture of the religion of Islam. Apart from this, this composite picture of Islam also creates a spiritual and theological form of this religion. Just like human being is called 'human' due to his physical shape, he is called 'Muslim' due to this spiritual or Islamic appearance, and the group of humans who embrace this spiritual appearance are known as 'Islamic nation' or 'Muslim Ummah'.

So, Islam and Islamic nation cannot retain their specific names unless they preserve their original forms and identities. If their Islamic identity is not preserved in its original form, or if it is mixed with identities of other nations, then neither these humans will deserve to be called Muslims nor their appearance will be worthy of Islamic title, rather they will be identified with the name of the nation whose appearance they have adopted.

At last, it is clear that it is the appearance and identity that ensure a nation's existence and mark out one religion from other religions. It is because of this appearance that every nation is given a distinct name and existence, and it is this identity which guarantees every nation's survival.

Distinctions of Nations and Differences of Religions

The above elaboration has substantiated our claim that differences in theology and beliefs and differences in religious laws have disunited the originally unified nations of the world and have separated each nation from the other. The distinctive traits that set every nation apart are actually concealed in customs and beliefs of their religions. If all religions and belief systems were to preach the same customs and doctrines and

they had not retained their intrinsic qualities, then they would have never been called religions, but one religion, and they would not have been known as religious laws, but one single law, and they would not have been named nations, but one sole nation. And that one nation would have been existed all over the world.

Therefore, nationhood or nation actually denotes a group of humans that adhere to a particular religion, belief system, or ideology, and whose traits (be it related to faith or practice) distinguish that group from other groups of humans. If this yardstick to determine nationhood is lifted or, in other words, if the distinctive traits of various groups are either removed or intermixed, then certainly no nation will be able to retain its name and identity.

Undeniably, a Christian is distinguishable from Jews and Pagans on account of the specific traditions of his religion. A Jew is separable from Christians and Pagans due to distinctive qualities of his doctrine. A Pagan is identifiable from Christians and Zoroastrian owing to his polytheistic customs. So in the same manner, a Muslim is totally different from a Christian, Jew, Pagan, Zoroastrian, Atheist, and Heretic by virtue of his distinctive beliefs and customs, doctrines and traditions, as well as having a strong faith on and acting in accordance to his religious law. He is as visibly different from people of other religions as a blind is different from a sighted, light is from darkness, scorching sun is from shadow, and alive is from dead.

As long as the sighted is characterized by having the sight, he cannot turn blind. As long as the light is characterized by its special qualities, it cannot become darkness. As long as

the sunlight is characterized by its unique features, it cannot convert into shadow. As long as the alive is characterized with distinction of life, he cannot be dead.

> The blind and the seeing are not alike, nor darkness and light; nor cool shade and torrid heat; nor are the living and the dead alike. [Fāṭir: 19-22]

Therefore, as long as a Muslim is characterized by Islamic traits, he cannot become non-Muslim, and as long as the Muslim nation is collectively holding fast to the traits and distinguishing features of Islam, it will remain prominent among all other nations.

At last, we can safely conclude that distinction of nation lies in distinction of religion. Nations owe their existence to distinguishing features and characteristics of their religions, and absence of these features and characteristics or their intermixture with features and characteristics of other religions entail destruction of both nation and religion.

It is this intermixture and blend of religious features – whether in terms of belief or custom – that we have term as "imitation of others". Whenever this devastating idea of mixing the right with wrong, i.e. the idea of imitating others, found its way into any religion, it damaged that religion beyond repair and eventually reduced it to nothing. This idea of imitation is culprit of sabotaging numerous powerful nations and great religions.

Centuries ago, it was this imitation which deprived Arabs of the true religion of Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him) and eliminated the original identity of Arab nation. A tribal

chief, ‘Amr ibn Luḥay, travelled to Syria and saw the Syrians worshipping idols; a phenomenon he approved of and believed it to be righteous. Upon his return to Hijaz, he placed an idol inside Kaaba and summoned people to worship it. Once started in Makkah and inside the holy house of Allah, the idol worshipping was readily accepted by the whole population of Arabia. As a result of this imitation of Pagans, Paganism prevailed throughout the Arab land and the whole country was deprived of the light of the true religion.

This is the reason the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said the following about the first imitator, ‘Amr ibn Luḥay:

> "I saw ‘Amr bin ‘Amir bin Luḥay Al-Khuza‘i dragging his intestines in the (Hell) Fire"[(11)]

One can easily notice how smoothly the true religion converted into the religion of ignorance and how quickly a monotheistic nation turned into a polytheistic one, and such a radical change occurred as a consequence of imitating others. It is very strange how this imitation replaced one religion with another and nationhood of one kind with another kind.

One may as well look into the recent past instead of going back centuries and he will observe how blindly following the West has gradually stripped he Republic of Turkey of its Islamic identity and how the imitation of Europe has led the Turkish nation to a point where they have totally lost interest in Islam and even the label of Islam no longer holds any value to them.

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(11) Muḥammad bin Ismā‘īl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 3521.

Even today, it is this tendency to imitate the West that created a mayhem in Kabul (Afghanistan) and paved the way to eradication of Islamic symbols. If this misleading and erroneous tendency is not checked by religion, the day is not far away when this Islamic country will be void of Islamic identity.

In short, imitation of other religions is such a deadly virus that whenever it enters the body of a nation, it ruins the body eventually leading it to death.

Taking into consideration the dramatic effects of the imitation over the course of history, we can describe it in the following words: imitation of others means breaking the defined limits and eliminating distinctive characteristics. In other words, imitation refers to transgressing the natural boundary or breaking the original limits. When one begins to imitate others, there will certainly be a change in his original appearance which will eventually result in complete elimination of his original and natural appearance thereby giving him an unnatural appearance, because once the predefined limits of something are removed, that thing cannot survive anymore.

For instance, let us assume that the reality of human being is confined to "life and sense perception". Life has some limits and boundary lines. It is within this boundary that he can sense things which makes him different from inorganic objects. It is within this boundary that he has the power of willful movement which distinguishes him from inanimate bodies like stones. And it is within this boundary that it is possible for him to grow which sets him apart from dried wood. So, life is a limit and dividing line which separates human being from inorganic bodies.

Another dividing line for the reality of human being is rationality and sense perception. It is within this boundary that he can perceive with comprehension, fluently speak, live a civilized and disciplined life, maintain social relations, and predominate over other species thanks to his inventions and discoveries. So, this boundary line separates him from horse, donkey, and all other non-rational animals. Therefore, human being can remain human only within the limits of these two dividing lines.

If, for example, he breaks away from the limit of life and creeps in the bounds of death, then the same human who was alive a while ago will transform into a lifeless inanimate body, and his capacity of growth, voluntary movement, and sense perception will be replaced by inactivity, involuntary idleness, and unconsciousness. At that point, we will be unable to even call him 'human being' except in the figurative sense.

If he remains within the bounds of life but breaks free from the limit of sense perception, then no doubt he will be alive but due to transgressing the boundary line of sense perception, the ignorance will replace knowledge, insensibility will replace consciousness, and barbarism will replace civility. And once human being is deprived of his original and innate qualities, there will certainly be foreign attributes ready to fill in which will prove to be fatal for his human nature, because the breach of boundary line indicates that it can no longer contain its internal elements nor can it defend against external ones.

So, just as the noblest of creatures, man, ends up losing his original nature due to imitation and intermixture of

non-human attributes, the same applies to religions and nations; when they do not put a stop to foreign customs and ideas, they fail to even contain their inherent qualities, and this intermixing and absence of boundary line kills the very spirit of nationhood thereby eliminating every pre-existing distinction among nations and religions.

Therefore, the only way to keep a particular nation on its original form and deterring it from merging with other nations is to prevent it from imitating others, from breaking the limits, from eradicating the inherent traits, and from contaminating its nature. This is the reason the Islamic Shariah has maintained a strict position with regards to imitation and has given stern warning to those who indulge in imitation of any sort. Some of the examples of Islam's strict position can be seen below:

(1)

The Prophet cursed men who imitate the appearance and behavior of women and women who imitate those of men,[12] because each of the two genders has its own distinctive characteristics and its own purpose. When a person of one gender imitates the other gender, he actually transgresses the defined limits of the original gender and goes against the purpose associated with it, for when the natural appearance of one sex is ruined, the purpose associated to it also goes in vain.

One may look into the Modern West and he will realize that the primary reason behind destruction of its domestic life is this imitation. European woman, like all

(12) Muḥammad bin Ismāʻīl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 5885.

other women of the world, was created to preserve human race and nurture new generations, to be a source of peace of mind and soul, to be a compassionate mother and a loyal wife, to adorn the household and sustain the family life. However, once this woman stepped out of the house and began to work in factories, markets, and ticket windows sporting manly attire, she started to appear on posters and billboards, she became the center of attraction, and she began to be seen with men in schools and colleges, so one has to ask himself did she fulfill the purpose of her creation? Has she not embraced masculinity at the cost of her femininity? Needless to say, she could neither fully retain her womanhood nor could fully assume manhood, rather she transformed into a third gender which was not a product of God's creation but of the human misdeed.

This woman, who belongs to the third gender, no longer has the feminine sentiments that she was endowed or the duties that were assigned to her. Her sentiments have changed. Her way of thinking has gone through a complete shift. Now, her heart and mind do not resemble the feminine heart and mind. She has adopted a semblance that does not belong to either male or female, as if the Almighty made a mistake by making the male and female two separate genders and creating distinction between the two, and as if this mistake has now been corrected by Western thinkers through introduction of so-called concepts of equality, liberalism, and feminism.

This change of attitude and mindset is definitely an outcome of breaking free from the limits set by the nature for which the prohibition of imitation was introduced. It has made it clear to us that this intermixing and merge between

the two genders, although given deceptively beautiful titles like liberty and equality, is a curse and a cause of devastation in the sight of Islam. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) strictly prohibited from imitating opposite gender and cursed the imitators in a number of traditions:

> Abū Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) cursed the man who dressed like a woman and the woman who dressed like a man.(13)

In another tradition, he said:

> Those women who imitate men and those men who imitate women have nothing to do with us.(14)

(2)

The Islamic Shariah denounced drawing portraits or pictures of living being; because when a painter draws a portrait or makes a statue, he, in a way, breaks the boundary line that separates the creation from the creator and he steps into the domain of creator. He tries to imitate the creator and remove the distinction between the two. This is why the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> The painter of these pictures will be punished on the Day of Resurrection, and it will be said to them: Make alive what you have created.(15)

In another narration:

(13) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʻAṣriyyah, n.d.) Hadith no. 4098.

(14) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Hadith no. 6892.

(15) Muḥammad bin Ismāʻīl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 7557.

> The people who will receive the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection will be those who try to make the like of Allah's creations.(16)

(3)

The Shariah has forbidden for old men to imitate the young. For example, plucking grey hairs, wearing bright colors, acting childish and frisky, and being heedless like the young men do. It is because such behavior amounts to crossing the limits of old age (which possesses certain qualities) to enter the boundary of youth; an action that is tantamount to leaving the good for bad. However, if the young imitate the elderly, it will be a progress from low to high, and such imitation will be identical to imitation of pious by sinner, or imitation of Muslim by non-Muslim. In fact, imitating someone who is in better position is actually desired by the Shariah. It has been quoted in a Hadith:

> The best of the youths among you are those who imitate those of mature years, while the worst of your elderly are those who imitate the young.(17)

(4)

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him), the second Caliph of Islam, disliked that a slave imitates free men or a slave-girl emulates free women in such a way that the two become indistinguishable. It is

(16) Ibid, Hadith no. 5954

(17) 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl,* edited by: Bakri Ḥayyāni and Ṣafwah al-Saqā (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 5th edition, 1981), 15:776, Hadith no. 43058.

reported that he rebuked a slave-girl for covering her head the way free women used to do. He said to her: "Uncover your head. Do not imitate free women".(18)

To sum up, the Almighty has bestowed distinctive features on each and every class, gender, species, group, and nation, just as he has granted unique form and exclusive appearance to each and every particle of this universe which makes it distinguishable from others. In the same way, He has drawn distinction among all religious groups and even among various fractions of Muslim community that possess an independent identity in the eye of Shariah, so that the purpose and role of each fraction can be preserved.

Evidently, the imitation of young by the elderly, the imitation of man by woman and vice versa, and the imitation of free by the slave fall under the category of imitation of Muslim by Muslim. Yet, Islam disapproves even this type of imitation. Islam does not want these fragments of Muslim community to remove the dividing line and to blend into each other, as such blend and intermixture results in their failure to fulfill their respective roles.

It is worth pondering that the Shariah, which dislikes imitation even within different sections of its own followers, will it ever approve that a Muslim imitates a non-Muslim; a lover of Allah emulates the enemy of Allah; an obedient servant follows the suit of disobedient; an adherent of truth knocks on the door of falsehood? Can Islam ever approve that? Can someone with slightest element of truth, religious fervor, and ardency allow that a person who claims to be Muslim and

(18) 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf* (India: Al-Majlis al-'Ilmī, 1403 A.H.), 3:136, Hadith no. 5064.

expresses the love for Allah through his tongue but attacks the limits set by the Almighty through his hands, demolishes them, nullifies their wise purposes and intents, and establishes non-Islamic order? Will anyone with straight mindset allow that to happen?

> And those are the limits [set by] Allah. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah has certainly wronged himself. [At-Ṭalāq: 1]

Section Four: Imitation of Non-Muslims in Islamic Texts and Traditions

Imitation of Non-Muslims in the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran, despite being a strong proponent of unity and integrity (through calling for universal harmony and brotherhood), aimed at retaining the theological differences and religious distinctions (as long as those groups fall under the classification of religion), so that every nation can be identified through its distinctive features. On the one hand, it raised the slogan of "do not be divided" [ʾĀl ʿImrān: 103], and on the other, it called itself 'Al-Furqān', the criterion between right and wrong. On one side, it induced the world to uphold concord and harmony, and on the other side, it named itself 'the decisive word' which distinguishes good from evil.

Indeed, this criterion and decisive word has separated out Islam from Kufr, belief from disbelief, trust from mistrust, and true religion from false religions.

Before the revelation of Quran, people had confused the creator with creation. Some of them had ascribed Allah's attributes to his creations, and others had associated

imperfect attributes of creation with Allah. Then came the decisive word of Allah, the holy Quran, to eliminate this confusion and separate the *tawḥīd* (belief of oneness of God) from *shirk* (polytheism). All the religions had forgotten the difference between right and wrong, they had mixed up the good and evil, but this criterion drew a dividing line between the two and clearly defined the limits of right and wrong. It enjoined the good and forbade the evil. Every belief system had lost the sense of purity and impurity, but this holy book differentiated the two by making pure things lawful and impure things unlawful.

Further, just as the noble Quran distinguished Islam from Kufr, right from wrong, good from evil, pure from impure, lawful from unlawful, and truth from falsehood, it also divided the nations in two opposite groups; those who are on the right path and those who are on the wrong path, so that there remains no element of confusion between the wretched and the blessed, the pious and the sinner, the obedient and the disobedient, the believer and the disbeliever, the allies of Rahman and the allies of Satan.

At one place, this divine book asked the question: "Then will We treat the Muslims like the criminals?" [Al-Qalam: 35]

At another place, it clarified that believers and spreaders of corruption are different kinds and there is no similarity between these two:

> Shall We treat those who believe and do good works as those who spread corruption in the earth; or shall We treat the pious as the wicked? [Ṣād: 28]

On one occasion, the Quran made it clear that the doers of good deeds deserve to be treated differently from the doers of bad deeds, in their lifetime as well as after their death:

> Or do those who commit evils think We will make them like those who have believed and done righteous deeds - [make them] equal in their life and their death? Evil is that which they judge. [Al-Jāthiyah: 21]

On another occasion, it explained that the contrast between a righteous and a wicked person is equal to the contrast between a visually impaired and a sighted person:

> And not equal are the blind and the seeing, nor are those who believe and do righteous deeds and the evildoer. Little do you remember. [Ghāfir: 58]

At some places, it illustrated that a monotheist cannot be equal to a polytheist; They belong to two different classifications:

> Allah presents an example: a slave owned by quarreling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know. [Az-Zumar: 29]

> Allah presents an example: a slave [who is] owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision, so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal? Praise to Allah! But most of them do not know. [An-Naḥl: 75]

> And Allah presents an example of two men, one of them dumb and unable to do a thing,

> while he is a burden to his guardian. Wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal to one who commands justice, while he is on a straight path? [An- Naḥl: 76]

Further, this final book of Allah commanded its followers to keep the truth and falsehood separate and not to mix them up, just as they have been kept separate by nature:

> And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]. [Al-Baqarah: 42]

In short, despite being an advocate of unity, the holy Quran urges to maintain the distinction among religions and adherents of religions. In fact, the unity which it advocates is that all the nations be assimilated into Islam, so that there do not exist multiple nations or religions, but one nation and one religion; Islam.

> "[Until] religion is wholly for Allah." [Al-Anfāl:39]

Islam does not want the type of unity in which the evil integrates with the good while keeping its original form, the darkness is mingled with light while retaining its dark face, thereby producing a new thing which will be the combination of good and bad, light and darkness. Hence, what remains there is neither pure good nor pure evil, neither actual darkness nor light.

If Quran was to tolerate such unity which is achieved by mixing the truth with falsehood, it would have also tolerated the absence of the Quran and Quranic nation as well as the absence of the religion of Islam and Muslim nation; because as we have demonstrated earlier, such

integration and intermix is a darkness that first covers something and then wipes it out completely.

If this deadly intermixture finds its way to the realm of knowledge, it removes the distinction between right and wrong, and when it enters the domain of practice, it muddles between good and evil deeds. As a result, any nation with specific set of knowledge and practices is gradually led to renounce its unique identity, and is consequently deprived of its independent existence, and merges with another nation with whose set of knowledge and practices it had diluted itself. "He who copies any people is one of them."(19)

In other words, the imitation, merger, and intermixture between truth and falsehood is the first step towards elimination of truth. This is why the above mentioned verse [Al-Baqarah: 42] first prohibited mixing up the truth with falsehood and then concealing the truth which is an aftereffect of the said mix-up, since this mix-up is followed by concealment of the light of truth and spread of the darkness of falsehood.

The holy Quran first expressed its disapproval of the mix-up of truth and falsehood through multiple examples, and then it proceeded to strictly forbidding such mix-up and merger. Not only that, but it went one step further by laying down a complete practical guide which helps to refrain oneself from indulging in the prohibited imitation. This guide does not only stop one from imitating other nations, but also discourages any such act that is likely to lead to the imitation, so that a Muslim must not resemble a non-Muslim in any way whatsoever. The Quranic guide includes the following provisions:

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(19) Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4031.

Dissociation from non-Muslims

The Quran prohibits Muslims from having close association, intimate friendship, and affectionate relationship with non-Muslims. Human heart is the king of all organs; when it inclines to someone or something, all the organs including the brain follow suit. Therefore, a heartfelt connection with non-Muslims will persuade the Muslim to mimic non-Muslims in his inner and outer self which is totally against what the Quran wants from a Muslim.

At one place, the holy book forbade the believers from having alliance with Jews and Christians:

> O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people. [Al-Māʼidah: 51]

And at another place, it ordered them not to have alliance with any non-Muslim who makes fun or mocks the religion of Islam:

> O you who have believed, take not those who have taken your religion in ridicule and amusement among the ones who were given the Scripture before you nor the disbelievers as allies. And fear Allah, if you should [truly] be believers. [Al-Māʼidah: 57]

In a third verse, it disallowed Muslims to be affectionate towards those who oppose Allah and his Messenger, no matter if they are disbelievers or open sinners:

> You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those - He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them with spirit from Him. [Al-Mujādalah: 22]

Admittedly, this is a fact that when a part of believer's heart gets occupied by the love and affection towards disbeliever, that part is deprived of love and admiration for Islam. Otherwise, how would two contradictory things fit in one place? Those who are cognizant of reality have realized this truth and claimed that love of disbelievers corrupts the believer's faith. Sahl ibn 'Abdullah Tustari (may Allah have mercy on him) even said: "one whose faith is pure cannot have affectionate love for an innovator, let alone a disbeliever". Imām Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) deduced from the above-mentioned verse the obligation to oppose and not to sit with members of Qadariyyah sect. If this strict attitude towards disbelievers is taken out of the heart of a Muslim, the affection will definitely fill in, and once deep affection and intimate sentiments take root in his heart, the Muslim will eventually become part of disbelievers and assume their similitude in appearance and bearing.

The noble Quran has itself highlighted the outcome of seeking alliance of non-Muslims:

> And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people. [Al-Mā'idah: 51]

Considering this, the first thing every believer needs to do, as per the above-mentioned verses, is to cut off all deep-hearted relations with disbelievers, following the path of Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ (may Allah be pleased with him) who severed his ties with his disbeliever father and even killed him on the day of Badr; the path of Muṣ‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (may Allah be pleased with him) who disassociated himself from his brother, ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr, and killed him during the battle of Uḥud; the path of ‘Umar ibn al- Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him) who killed his uncle ‘Āṣ ibn Hishām during the battle of Badr; and the path of ‘Alī, Ḥamza, and ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥārith (Allah be pleased with them all) who killed their close relatives, ‘Utbah, Walīd ibn ‘Utbah, and Shaybah ibn Rabī‘ah; all for the sake of Islam and to protect their religion. They have created an immortal example of religious fervor and dedication to the cause of Islam which will continue to remind the upcoming generations of this Ummah the importance of these sentiments.

Declaration of dissociation

The Quran did not stop at that, rather it ordered its adherents to openly declare their dissociation and aloofness from disbelievers so that they do not attach any hopes to you. Allah proclaimed this dissociation about his Messenger (PBUH) in his sacred book:

> Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects - you, [O Muhammad], are not [associated] with them in anything. [Al-An‘ām: 159]

This verse clearly outlines that the Messenger of Allah has nothing to do with disbelievers. The expression used in the verse is: لست منهم (You are not one of them) which

is the opposite of أنت منهم (You are one of them). It is obvious that two persons cannot become one; when Zayd and Umar are two different persons, these two personalities cannot combine into one. Therefore, when someone says: 'you are from me and I am from you', it means that you belong to my class and I belong to yours, you are my associate and I am your associate, you are like me and I am like you.

The same expression has been used in other verses to describe the relationship and bond among Muslims: بعضكم من بعض (you are of one another) meaning that you are all members of one single classification, i.e. Muslim nation. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said to 'Alī: أنت مني وأنا منك (you are from me and I am from you), that is, we are one in our affairs; we share the same reality.

When the Quran stressed upon لست منهم (You are not one of them), it was to negate the same kind of bond. It means that you and them are not same; you and them are not part of single classification; you and them are fundamentally different. This is what the Quran has put this way: O Messenger! You have nothing to do with disbelievers; You are not part of them; You are not associated with them in any aspect; You belong to a totally different classification than that of disbelievers. A whole chapter in the divine book, Surah Al-Kāfirūn, is dedicated to proclaim this dissociation and detachment of Muslims from non-Muslims:

> Say, "O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be

> worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion." [Al-Kāfirūn: 1-6]

This declaration of detachment is same as the one declared by Prophet Ibrāhīm (may Allah's peace and mercy be upon him) from his disbelieving father and tribe.

> And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said to his father and his people, "Indeed, I am disassociated from that which you worship". [Al-Zukhruf: 26]

And the aloofness pronounced by followers of Ibrāhīm from idol worshippers:

> There has already been for you an excellent pattern in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, "Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone". [Al-Mumtaḥanah: 4]

The declaration of dissociation has always been the tradition of Prophets and Messengers and therefore, the believers – who claim to follow their footsteps – are also expected to follow the same pattern.

To conclude, the believers are obliged to dissociate themselves from disbelievers by their hearts and to declare this dissociation by their tongues, since these two are the primary components of human being. As an Arab poet says:

لسان الفتى نصف ونصف فؤاده
فلم يبق إلا صورة اللحم والدم

> [Half of a man is his tongue and half is his heart. The rest is just flesh and blood]

Abandoning the path of non-Muslims

Islamic Shariah requires Muslims to distant themselves from non-Muslims not only by heart and tongue, but also by behavior and action. Muslims are obliged to refrain from following non-Muslims in their customs and traditions. Prophet Mūsā (Moses) and Prophet Hārūn (Aaron) – may Allah have mercy on them both – were commanded not to follow the path of the misguided lot. Allah said, as mentioned in the holy Quran:

> So remain on a right course and follow not the way of those who do not know. [Yūnus: 89].

The same advice was given by Mūsā to Hārūn when he was leaving for Mount Sinai:

> And Moses said to Aaron, his brother: "Take my place among my people, act righteously, and do not follow the path of those who create mischief." [Al-A'rāf: 142]

When it has been established that the path of the Prophets is the one straight path, to which they stick fast with all their knowledge and righteousness, then why would their followers need to abandon their path and abide by differing and corrupted paths of non-Muslims? After all, Muslims have been given this golden principle:

> This is My way -that which is straight: follow it, then, and do not follow other paths lest they scatter you from His path. This is what He has enjoined upon you, so that you may beware. [Al-An'ām: 153].

Not dealing with non-Muslims

The Shariah did not stop at this degree of dissociation, aloofness, and dissimilarity between Muslims and non-Muslims, but it urged to maintain even more distance by advocating to stop dealing with non-Muslims. If Islam becomes the dominating power, its rule becomes sovereign, Shariah courts acquire judiciary powers and their doors are opened for all, then Muslims will be advised to refrain from turning to non-Muslims for recourse, involving them in politics, or engaging them in their affairs. For, such casual involvement and engagement may also lead to the same undesirably intimate friendship.

Known for his political insight, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him) has placed much emphasis on this aspect. He wrote the following letter to the governors of his Caliphate: “Do not exchange letters with *dhimmīs*, lest amity should be generated between you and them, nor call them by their surnames; you must dishonor them but do not wrong them.”(20)

The following conversation between ‘Umar and Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī will further reveal the wisdom behind Shariah’s stand on dealing with non-Muslims. With a transmission of Ṣaḥiḥ category, Imām Aḥmad quotes Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī as saying:

> I told ‘Umar that I had a Christian scribe, to which he replied, ‘What is the matter with you? God fight you! Haven’t you heard

(20) Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm li Mukhalafat Aṣḥāb al-Jaḥīm,* edited by: Nāṣir ‘Abd al-Karīm al-‘Aql (Beirut: Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1999), 1:367.

> God's words, "O believers, do not take the Jews and Christian as allies; they are allies of each other." [Al-Mā'idah: 51] Why didn't you employ a Muslim instead?' I replied, 'O Commander of the Faithful, for me – his penmanship; for him – his faith!' He replied, 'I shall not honor those whom God has dishonored, nor esteem those He has humbled, nor bring close those whom He has kept afar.'[21]

This conversation puts forth the following points:

1- Unless there is a dire need, Muslims must not turn to non-Muslims for assistance and recourse, especially when this entails holding them in high esteem.

2- The excuse that "for us – their service; for them – their religion" is absurd, because their service comes with their company which may eventually diminish or remove the strictness towards them; which is considered an inseparable element of a Muslim's attitude and a shortfall of which often contributes to compromising and apologetic behavior concerning one's religion.

3- No one who comes after 'Umar and Abū Mūsā (may Allah be pleased with them) can reach their level of piety. Even if someone, let's assume, reach that level, there is no reason that Abū Mūsā should be prohibited from employing non-Muslims and this person is not prohibited. Let's

(21) Ibid, 1:185.

even assume that he has very firm and strong belief so much so that it is not likely to be affected in any way by the company of non-Muslims, but still this conduct of such a prominent personality might encourage common Muslims to employ non-Muslims and keep their companionship; they might consider his course of action as an ideal to follow; and the intermixing of Muslims and non-Muslims becomes so rampant that it turns into an incurable disease.

4- When the Creator himself did not honor a fraction of His creations nor did He allow to give any respect to them, how can He approve that His devotees esteem His enemies, admire whom He disliked, and accept whom He rejected? Otherwise, this will be an insult to commandments of Islam and disapproval of God's actions.

5- Islam's objectives are not purely political, rather its aim is to establish religion. Political complications are only embraced as a means to establish the religion. So, if one section of politics becomes the source of corruption and comprising over one's religion, that section will be cut off without thinking twice in order to preserve the religion. Otherwise, the actual arrangement will be reversed as the means will become the objective, and the objective will not even hold the status of means.

Not socializing with non-Muslims

The Shariah went one more step ahead to stop Muslims from socializing with non-Muslims in order to preserve their religious identity and to prevent imitation. For, regular interactions and meetings more often than not result in the

same affectionate relationships that are considered harmful for religious identity and distinctive characteristics of Muslims and sometimes even prove destructive for their faith; because the gatherings of disbelievers usually contain ridicule and mockery to the verses of Allah which in turn plants mistrust in the believers' hearts. This is why Allah said in his divine Book:

> He has already revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's revelations being denied or ridiculed, then do not sit in that company unless they engage in a different topic, or else you will be like them. Indeed, Allah will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers in Hell all together. [An-Nisā': 140]

Moreover, when a *munāfiq* (hypocrite) can be labeled 'Muslim' just because he mixes up with Muslims and speaks in their tone, why can a Muslim not be treated as a disbeliever or hypocrite when he regularly socializes and interacts with them? The Holy Quran has already answered this: "Indeed, you would then be like them." [An-Nisā': 140].

Not fulfilling their demands

At last, the Shariah severed even the last remaining thread of connection between believers and disbelievers by forbidding Muslims from fulfilling, honoring, or even paying heed to unrightful demands of non-Muslims; because honoring even one of their illicit demands may lead to fulfilling many other demands and completing many other wishes, and they might use it as an example to persuade you for their future aspirations. Who knows how much compromise one may

have to make and how many Islamic injunctions he may have to sacrifice in order to please them. The Quran made it clear that obeying their unlawful desires is actually tantamount to defying the truth of Islam.

The Quran said addressing the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

> Then We put you, [O Muhammad], on an ordained way concerning the matter [of religion]; so follow it and do not follow the inclinations of those who do not know. [Al-Jāthiyah: 18]

At another place, it said:

> And do not follow their inclinations away from what has come to you of the truth. [Al-Mā'idah: 48]

Or:

> And judge, [O Muhammad], between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations and beware of them, lest they tempt you away from some of what Allah has revealed to you. [Al-Mā'idah: 49]

At one place, it warned the Prophet:

> And if you should follow their inclinations after what has come to you of knowledge, you would not have against Allah any ally or any protector. [Al-Ra'd: 37]

These divine verses are explicit in directing believers against following the desires of disbelievers. They contain such expressions as 'the truth', 'knowledge', 'ordained way',

and ‘what Allah has revealed’ to indicate that this Shariah is sufficient for them and that they do not need to follow anything whatsoever after its revelation let alone the desires of disbelievers. If one is still tempted to follow their inclinations, he will end up in ignorance instead of knowledge, in falsehood instead of truth, in confusion between various ways instead of certainty of ordained way, and in delusions of Satan instead of the guidance revealed by Allah.

> “Will you take a meaner thing in exchange for what is better?” [Al-Baqarah: 61]

Declaration of hatred and animosity

After wiping off every possibility of inner or outer connection, the Shariah moved ahead to enjoin that the relation between friends of Allah and enemies of Allah should be of hatred and animosity and not of love and affection. They are enemies of Allah as well as his devotees. They and their supreme leader, Satan, wish to drive all believers towards hellfire out of their animosity.

> Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze. [Fāṭir: 6]

As a matter of fact, this animosity is not a result of some inner impulse rather a reaction to their hostility towards the truth. So, this is a legitimate emotion and therefore ought to be proclaimed without hesitation, so that the enemies of Allah give up the hope of luring and converting Muslims to their side. The Quran cited an example of the people of Ibrāhīm (may Allah’s peace and mercy be upon him):

> There has already been for you an excellent pattern in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, "Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone. [Al-Mumtaḥanah: 4]

Then, the Quran further instructed its adherents not to rely on mere declaration of enmity, but to also be prepared for battle and physical confrontation so that the animosity continues till they denounce disbelief and return to Allah:

> And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. [Al-Anfāl: 60]

In conclusion, it is only due to this firmness against disbelievers, declaration of animosity, and preparedness for any confrontation that Muslims have been conferred the title of “firm with the unbelievers” [Al-Fatḥ: 29], and they have been chosen as soldiers of Allah’s army to defend His religion against His enemies. So, believers and disbelievers are two armies who are always head-to-head and face-to-face. One is backed by angels and the other by devils. One is bound to triumph and prosper and the other is destined to be humiliated, disgraced, and embarrassed.

Not imitating non-Muslims

How can emulation and imitation be allowed between such rivals and combatants? Is it even imaginable that the Islamic

Shariah – which is very strict about cutting off ties with non-Muslims, declaring dissociation and animosity, not having business deals and not socializing with them, and which does not even tolerate honoring their desires – can this same Shariah allow its adherents to imitate disbelievers? To copy their outward form or their way of behaving? To bear their resemblance in appearance and attire, conduct and demeanor, customs and culture? Not at all. Not "until a camel enters into the eye of a needle". [Al-A'rāf: 40]

The ever-existing animosity and conflict is an evidence in itself that there should be considerable differences and distinctions between these two opposing groups; not only in inward terms, but also in visible form and dressing style. When two armies engage in war, swords collide, there are cries and screams, bloodshed and chaos everywhere, making it virtually impossible to identify friend from enemy, then it is only this visible variation and difference of uniforms that draws distinction between an ally and opponent. Otherwise in the midst of this mayhem, if their own soldier appears in the attire of the enemy, then no matter how much he shouts that he is not from the enemy's side, he will be considered a member of the rival group and will be given the same treatment as them. 'Whoever imitates a people is one of them'.

On the other side, if a soldier from enemy's side wears the uniform of rival army and mingles with them, then the same swords that were thirsty for enemy's blood would become his protectors and would not harm him until his disguise is exposed and his real identity is revealed.

Thus, these two armies (believers and disbelievers, the party of Allah and the party of Satan), who have been battling in the religious realm since forever, must also

maintain visible differences in their uniforms, weaponry, symbols, and emblems, so that anyone could be easily identified in this crowd of humans, a friend could be distinguished from enemy at first glance, and an ally could not be confused with opponent because of his attire.

This is the reason why the Almighty has prescribed 'the garment of piety' for His party and 'the garb of hunger and fear' for the party of Satan. For, endeavors of the former – the party of Allah – are not because of greed of land or hunger for wealth, rather to raise the name of Allah and slogan of Islam. Therefore, instead of getting impressed by superficial glory and charm of this world, this army of God only fears Allah and follows the path of piety. Its faith and determination on the inside, and behavior and attire on the outside, manifest the noble qualities of righteousness and piety; As if piety and the fear of God has surrounded them completely like a garment.

> The finest of all is the garment of piety. That is one of the signs of Allah so that they may take heed. [Al-A'raf: 26]

On the contrary, all the efforts of the other party – the party of Satan – are aimed at acquiring the land and accumulating the wealth, and as a result, they fear everything of this universe except God: "They think that every shout is against them." [Al-Munāfiqūn: 4]

This is why they only show their strength when they are behind a wall or taking cover in a fortress: "They will not fight you all except within fortified cities or from behind walls." [Al-Ḥashr: 14]

Their hunger for land encourages them to fight but the fear of life makes them run away. So they are in a

constant state of hunger and fear which has overtaken their hearts and minds like a piece of cloth, and this conflict between greed and dread is clearly visible in their actions, behavior, and attire.

The holy Quran emphasized the need to eradicate even physical and outward similarities between these two groups, so that the obedient and the upholder of truth becomes distinguishable from disobedient and the supporter of falsehood, and so that disbelievers could not find excuse or attach any hope to believers in any section of their theological or practical life. The Quran states:

> Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened; and many of them are defiantly disobedient. [Al-Ḥadīd: 16]

And:

> O you who have believed, be not like those who abused Moses. [Al-Aḥzāb: 69]

And:

> O you who have believed, do not be like those who disbelieved. [ʾĀl ʿImrān: 156]

The first verse talks about the People of the Book, the second about Jews, and the third about all disbelievers in general. The message of these verses is certainly the prohibition of imitating non-Muslims. Had it been the mere prohibition of disbelief, the Quran could have used such expressions as ‘do

not disbelieve' or 'do not be disbelievers'. But as a matter of fact, being a disbeliever is different from being similar to disbelievers; A non-Muslim who is open about his disbelief and is visibly distant from Islam does not cause as much harm to Islam and Islamic identity as the Muslim who emulates non-Muslims and yet claims to be a Muslim; because in case of former, belief and disbelief are distinct and totally detached from each other, whereas in the latter case, the two are ultimately intermixed and merged into each other which, as we have proved earlier, results in dissolution and destruction of both. It is only distinctive existence that ensures survival.

To sum up, the concern of above-mentioned verses is to eradicate every possibility of similitude between belief and disbelief and to draw a clear distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim, so that the light of Islam does not merge with the darkness of Kufr, rather the two contradictory realities remain visibly different.

Imitation of non-Muslims in Prophetic Traditions

After the holy Quran, let us now turn to the most authentic and foremost source of interpretation of Quranic verses, the Prophetic traditions (Ḥadīth pl. Aḥādīth), to understand the significance and vital nature of prohibition of imitation. During the historic sermon of Ḥajjatul Widā' delivered before an enormous gathering of his companions, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) announced the following regarding imitation:

> Behold! Everything pertaining to the Days of Ignorance is under my feet completely abolished.[22]

(22) Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* Hadith no. 2224.

The detailed meaning of ignorance we have already discussed in a separate section of this book in which we have proved that every religion except Islam can be rightfully labeled as ignorance. So, the meaning of the above Hadith is that every religious or moral code that was, or is, prevalent other than the Islamic Shariah stands abolished, totally rejected, and is no longer worthy of any consideration. Now, no one is allowed to adhere to any religion and hope to attain goodness except for the religion of Islam.

At another occasion, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> The most hated persons to Allah are three: (1) A person who deviates from the right conduct, i.e., an evil doer, in the Ḥaram (sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina); (2) a person who seeks that the traditions of the Pre-lslamic Period of Ignorance, should remain in Islam (3) and a person who seeks to shed somebody's blood without any right.(23)

The attempt to mix traditions of ignorance with Islamic values, and abiding by them instead of Islam, is the imitation that is prohibited by Shariah.

At one more place, the Prophet (PBUH) introduced to us a clear-cut rule: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them”.(24)

This Hadith serves as a comprehensive principle for the concept of imitation. This Hadith tells us that whenever a person imitates a nation or a group of people, no matter if

(23) Muḥammad bin Ismāʿīl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 6882.
(24) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwū*d, Hadith no. 1431.

they are good and pious people or evil and wicked, and no matter if the imitator follows them in something good or bad; whether in lifestyle or culture and civilization, the end result is that the imitator forsakes his original identity and becomes a part of the people whom he had imitated.

Thus, the above quoted Hadith makes it clear that imitating others is an effective way to demolish religions and religious laws just as it is a reason to destroy nations and people in the physical world. This spells out the fact that everything, be it from physical world or religious realm, requires the principle of prohibition of imitation, otherwise it will fail to retain its original existence and will eventually be assimilated into that which it was imitating in terms of appearance, behavior, and even legal implications.

This is why some Muslim jurists drew the inference from this Hadith that: if a Jinn appears in snake's form, it can be killed without incurring a legal punishment. It is because Islamic Shariah has allowed to kill snakes and scorpions even inside the Haram (sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina), and when a Jinn assumes the form of these creatures, he becomes one of them and, therefore, the same legal rules apply to him as snakes and scorpions.

Moreover, based on this same Hadith, all the companions of Prophet, their successors, and early generation of the Ummah detested any kind of change in appearance and conduct caused by the tendency of imitation. Furthermore, they have quoted the same Hadith while expressing their dislike.

Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, the companion of the Prophet, was once invited for a wedding reception. When he reached there, he saw some non-Islamic traditions being

followed. He immediately turned back saying: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them".(25)

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was once asked about shaving the back of the neck. He replied: "This is the practice of Magians and whoever imitates a people is one of them".(26)

Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, the grandson of the Prophet, used to say: "It is rarely seen that a man imitates a people and does not end up becoming their part".(27)

Khaṭṭāb ibn al-Mu'alla al-Makhzūmī said the following while advising his son: "Imitate intelligent people; you shall soon be amongst them. Put on the noble appearance; you shall soon acquire it".(28)

An Arab poet said:

فتشبهوا إن لم تكونوا مثلهم   إنّ التشبه بالكرام فلاح

[Translation: Try to imitate them if you are not like them; Indeed in imitating the honorable lies success.]

To conclude, the above-mentioned Hadith is a strong evidence on prohibition of imitation in Islam. In fact, if we rely on the literal meaning, the wordings of this Hadith declare the act of imitating disbelievers as Kufr and the imitator as Kafir, same as how the Quranic verse: "And whoever is an ally to them is one of them" declares everyone who has friendship with disbelievers

(25) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:361.
(26) Ibid, 1:205.
(27) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwi, *Maqāṣid al-Ḥasanah fī Bayān Kathīr min al-Aḥādīth al-Mushtaharah 'alā al-Alsinah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1985), 639.
(28) Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān, *Rawḍat al-'Uqalā' wa Nuzhat al-Fuḍalā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya), 200.

as one of them. This is another matter that Kufr has different levels, but it is certain that imitation in general leads a Muslim closer to the boundary of Kufr. It is because once the boundaries of Islam are shattered through the act of imitation, (whether it is in culture and lifestyle or in rituals and ethics) these shattered boundaries will surely be replaced by the boundaries of disbelief, and gradually the building of the imitator's faith will, God forbid, be reduced to ruins.

Imitation of non-Muslims and our Predecessors

After elucidating the concept of imitation in the light of Quran and Sunnah, I deem it appropriate to present some practical examples from our predecessors' legacy that show their approach in dealing with the matter of imitation so that the inferences drawn from the textual sources are substantiated by their practical endorsement.

Imitation in the era of Ṣaḥāba

Undoubtedly, the best of generations is the generation of ṣaḥāba (the companions of the Prophet), and the status of 'Umar al-Fārūq among the companions in terms of political wisdom requires no introduction. It was his political insight that he emphasized a lot on avoiding the imitation of other nations in order to preserve the true characteristics of Islam. He did not only care about basic beliefs and foundations of Islam, but also he gave much more attention to preserving the ancillary practices of the religion, since negligence in them eventually leads to negligence in basic tenets. Umm al-Mu'minīn ʿĀʾishah (r.a) used to caution Muslims: "beware of seemingly insignificant sins".[29]

(29) Imām Aḥmad has recorded this Hadith on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd narrating from the Prophet (PBUH) in his Musnad, no. 3818.

In fact, taking minor sins lightly leads one to adopting an audacious attitude towards committing major sins. This is why ‘Umar al-Fārūq had issued strict orders to stay away from imitating other nations even in small things. Here, we quote an excerpt from his letter addressed to the Arabs of Azerbaijan which strongly urges them to maintain their religious identity and reminds them of their cultural traditions:

> “O people! Wear *izār* (lower garment tied to the waist covering the lower half of the body) and *ridā*' (outer wrapping garment/shawl). Wear sandals and throw away shoes and long trousers. Wear the clothing of your father, Ismā‘īl. Beware of luxury living and dressing in the manner of the people of ‘*Ajam* (non-Arabs). Bask in the sun because it is the Hammam of the Arabs. Have a rough lifestyle, wear harsh clothes, train yourself for hardship, do not use stirrup while riding. Practice target shooting and jumping on the horse with agility (without using stirrup).”[30]

The intent behind encouraging the Arabs to retain their traditional way of living in all walks of life was the same; to create cultural distinction and to eliminate the likelihood of imitation. The above excerpt shows us how much the pious companions cared about preserving even their smallest customs and practices which is today seen as fanaticism and narrow mindedness.

(30) ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15:472, no. 41870.

What is it, one wonders, that has drastically changed people's mentality that the efforts to preserve religious and cultural identity – which were the basis of success of Islam and Muslims – are now labeled as fundamentalism and intolerance? Go through the pages of history and you will find that when earlier generations of Muslims strictly adhered to pure Islamic ideology, code of beliefs, and thought process, they were dominant, victorious, and progressing despite their 'fundamentalism'. Now, compare it with the present condition of Muslims; as much as they are becoming so-called liberal, broad-minded, and tolerant, they are also gradually losing their influence, prestige, and even their respect as a community.

Had this tolerance and liberalism been the cause of progress and advancement, the modern tolerant and liberal Muslims would have acquired more dominance and prestige in the world than what their intolerant and narrow-minded forerunners had achieved fourteen centuries ago. But the reality is just the opposite; they are regressing with every passing day instead of progressing.

The lesson learnt from this comparison between past and present is that no nation can preserve its national and religious identity in this world without adhering to the fundamental rule of preservation, that is, avoiding imitation of other nations. Moreover, I have no hesitation to assert – and it is not an exaggeration either – that it is only Islam that has introduced this principle and rightfully so, owing to its immense wisdom and being the only true religion. Otherwise, if a false and racist religion tries to copy Islam in this respect through its absurd discriminatory teachings, it will not be able to survive for long.

During the caliphate of ‘Umar, when Islamic rule expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula and the intermixture of Arabs and non-Arabs rapidly increased, ‘Umar felt a need to pay special attention to the preservation of original Arabic culture; because it was very likely that many Arabs would be impressed by the glamour of non-Arab cultures and would end up abandoning their simple Arabic lifestyle and would begin to imitate non-Arabs. For this reason, besides his focus on the territorial expansion, ‘Umar did two things: Firstly, he advised Muslims to protect their religious uniqueness and Islamic traditions and to refrain from imitating non-Arabs, as illustrated by his letter cited above. Secondly, he instructed non-Muslim subjects of his caliphate not to assume the appearance of Muslims as long as they are non-Muslims, so that both communities remain distinct from each other with all their uniqueness and every path leading to imitation is blocked.

‘Umar made a pact with non-Muslim subjects (*dhimmīs*) on the following conditions which were published and implemented throughout the Islamic territory:

> “That we will honor the Muslims and rise up in our assemblies when they wish to take their seats; that we will not imitate them in our dress, either in the cap, turban, sandals, or parting of the hair; that we will not make use of their expressions of speech, nor adopt their surnames; that we will not ride on saddles, or gird on swords, or take to ourselves arms or wear them, or engrave Arabic inscriptions on our rings; that we will not sell wine; that we will cut the hair in the front of our heads; that we will keep to our

> own style of dress, wherever we may be; that we will wear girdles (*zunnār*) around our waists; that we will not display the cross upon our churches or display our crosses or our sacred books in the streets of the Muslims, or in their market-places; that we will strike the clappers in our churches lightly [wooden rattles or bells used to summon the people to church or synagogue]; that at the burial of our dead, we will not chant loudly or carry lighted candles in the streets of the Muslims or their market-places (This was related to Zoroastrians since they worship the fire)."[31]

There is more in the version of Ḥarb as narrated by al-Khallāl:

> "That we will not recite our services in a loud voice when a Muslim is present; that we will not carry Palm branches [on Palm Sunday] or our images in procession in the streets; that we will not bury our dead in Muslim graveyards." [32]

The ideal that this pact puts before us is that two nations must maintain a clear distinction in their religious as well as civil life so that their truth or falsehood can be accurately assayed and their distinctive features cannot be mixed up. This is why 'Umar had made it mandatory to maintain difference in religious rituals and acts of worship,

(31) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:363.
(32) Ibid

such as displaying cross and reciting services for Christians and carrying fire in procession for Zoroastrians, and similarly in the way of living, like in dressing, choosing names, surnames, hairstyle, and even expressions of speech.

In the same manner, 'Umar had issued this order for all the Muslim territories that: "Non-Muslims should not wear the dresses of Muslims in order to be distinguishable."(33)

It seems that outlining distinctions between Muslim nation and other nations is one of the core objectives of Islam which was quite prominent and greatly stressed upon in its early period. And the purpose is to keep each nation on its unique features and identity so that each is identified with its name and it becomes easy to differentiate between truth and falsehood. So, just as Muslims are required to avoid imitating non-Muslim both in appearance and bearing so that Islamic traits are not mixed with non-Islamic ones, the Islamic government will also bind non-Muslims to avoid Islamic appearance as long as they are on disbelief so that the darkness of disbelief does not mix with and muddle the light of Islam.

These decrees of 'Umar provide us an insight into the purpose of prohibiting imitation and reveal that the objective of Islam is to establish its supremacy as well as to uproot the primacy of disbelief; because all the honor, respect, and power belong to the true faith and its holders.

> "All honor belongs to Allah, His Messenger, and the believers, yet the hypocrites do not know." [Al-Munāfiqūn: 8]

(33) Ibid, 1:366.

And all the disgrace, dishonor, and inferiority belong to falsehood which is shared by all false religions. After all, unbelief is one nation.

Islam seeks to establish the rule of One God on the whole planet where the governing law is 'what Allah has revealed'.

> "And those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are indeed the disbelievers." [Al-Mā'idah: 44]

The example of those who hold on to revoked or man-made constitutions instead of the constitution of Allah is like praising the attractiveness of a man who is epitome of ugliness in front of a man who is epitome of beauty, or like hoping pure darkness to outshine pure light. It was only to shatter this wishful thinking of disbelievers that Islam used the sword on the one hand, and laid down fundamental rules of politics and governance on the other. Otherwise, if its aim were to eliminate the kufr itself, then these verses of the holy Quran would be rendered meaningless: "There is no compulsion in religion" [Al-Baqarah: 256], "Would you then force people to become believers?" [Yūnus: 99], "You are not ˹there˺ to compel them ˹to believe˺" [Al-Ghāshiyah: 22], and "You are no guardian over them." [Al-An'ām: 107]

As a matter of fact, Islam does not want to eliminate the kufr forcefully, but it does want to destroy its dominance and power. And this desire is as much natural as the desire of truth to uproot falsehood, or the desire of light to wipe out darkness. Therefore, every such action is unnatural and unlawful for a Muslim which establishes the supremacy of disbelievers, glorifies them, raises their morale, and consequently promotes disbelief.

This is the reason why ‘Umar al-Fārūq, through his official decrees, has reserved all the degrees of respect and honor for Islamic symbols and all the degrees of disgrace and dishonor for disbelief and disbelievers. And since most of the prominent objectives of Islam required prohibition of imitation, he prevented Muslims from adopting the symbols of disbelievers and forbade disbelievers from adopting the symbols of Islam as long as they are on their disbelief; because imitation from either side leads to intermixture and merger of communities which has been proven to be destructive for independent existence of nations and religions.

Thus, just as the prohibition of imitation, as a principle, ensures existence and preservation of the true religion, it also guarantees its independence, self-reliance, and dignity. So, it is easy to understand why it is so important in the eyes of Islam.

However, it should also be made clear that disrespect is one thing and oppression and injustice is another thing. Respect and disrespect depend on difference in status whereas oppression and injustice originate from prejudice and bigotry. With this description of honor and dishonor, the aim of Islam is to clearly define the status of belief and disbelief, and it does not mean that Muslim rulers have been given a free hand to mistreat and abuse non-Muslims. Never! Islam can never permit to deprive *dhimmīs* of their legal rights, which they possess as citizens of Islamic regime, thinking that they are inferior. In fact, they have equal fundamental rights and civil liberty as Muslim citizens do. In no way the Muslim government is allowed to ill-treat them or to deprive them of equal and fair judicial process for internal disputes. Muslims have no right to encroach on their

privacy and property, to harm them, or to shed their blood, just as they are not allowed to give the same honor and respect to non-Muslims as given to a Muslim, or to glorify them in such a manner that the admiration for disbelief and disbelievers finds its way to the hearts of Muslims. In short, justice and fair treatment is for all without exception, but honor and glory is only for Allah and his believers.

Imitation in the era of Tābi'ūn

In the first period of Islamic history, the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Khulafā al-Rāshidūn) in their political approach – and the rest of Ṣaḥāba through their general acceptance and practice – upheld the rule of prohibition of imitation and left the remarkable success and virtue of their period for the world to read through the pages of history. In the second period, their successors (Tābi'ūn: the generation of Muslims who came after the Companions of the Prophet) followed in their footsteps.

In the generation of Tābi'ūn, Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz mirrored the Rāshidūn Caliphs completely in all his actions and policies and gave the world an opportunity to enjoy the same blessed and virtuous environment which was the most prominent feature of the first period. He left no stone unturned in separating the truth from falsehood, good from evil, and genuine from fake. All of his decisions and policies were guided by the Quranic principle of "firm with disbelievers and compassionate with believers".

The following incident shows the importance he attached to this separation, his firmness in the matters of religion, and his strict and unapologetic stance on imitation. This 'Umar II followed the example of 'Umar I in this respect (May Allah be pleased with both of them):

> Some people of Banū Taghlib came to ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wearing turbans that looked like those worn by the Arabs (Muslims). They said: ‘O Commander of the Faithful, count us as the Arabs.’ (give us the same rights as the Arabs). He asked: ‘who are you?’ They replied: ‘we are Banū Taghlib’. He said: ‘aren’t you the middling Arabs?’ (your appearance is like Arabs) They replied: ‘we are Christians.’ He said: ‘bring my scissor’. He then clipped something from their forelocks, threw off their turbans, and tore the cloak of every one of them a piece of the size of a span so that they could belt themselves. He then commanded: “you must not ride on saddles but packsaddles, and you must let your legs come down on one side of the horse.”(34)

This incident proves that ‘Umar II paid attention to two things during his rule:

First: Keeping Muslims and Christians apart in outward appearance so that the two communities remain distinguishable. Since it was the golden age of Muslims and they were in power, they had no tendency or desire to imitate Christians. However, as defeated nations naturally tend to adopt every comportment of victorious nations, the Christians desired to wear the same garbs as Arab Muslims; to wear turban, to abandon their belts and *zunnārs* and don the Muslim attire and hairstyle.

(34) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:367.

Thus, the door of imitation was closed from Muslims' side, but it was open from the side of non-Muslims and it was very much expected that Christians would adopt the semblance of Arabs and would try their best to hide their true identity in order to get the same religious and political rights as Muslims. Therefore, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz proactively closed the door of any such scheme, issued orders regarding the same, and took away the defining features of Arabs from them right there.

Second: Through imposing restrictions on imitation, he on the one hand upheld the glory of Islam, and on the other crushed the spirit of disbelief, as manifested by his orders to clip the forelock, riding on packsaddles, and keeping both legs on one side of the horse.

Umar II issued many more similar decrees to be implemented throughout the Islamic territory. Ma'mar reported that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz wrote the following to one of his governors:

> "You should prevent the Christians from wearing cloaks, silk garments, and turbans. Pursue this matter energetically, publicize it, so that the prohibition may not be ignored by anybody concerned. It has been reported to me that many a Christians under your authority have repeatedly used turbans, abandoned wearing belt, and taken to let their hairs hang over their earlobes and shoulders, and abandoned clipping. Indeed, if this has been done within the scope of your authority, it is an indication of your weakness and failure. See to it, therefore, that all my orders, positive

> as well as negative, that have not been carried out are put into operation without any further permissiveness and concessions."[35]

The moral of this decree is also the same as the incident of Banū Taghlib, that is, maintaining distinction, abandoning imitation, and quashing even the thought of this deadly venture which has been proved fatal for the very existence of nations. Moreover, it also comes to light that the same amount of emphasis was laid on avoidance of imitation in the first and second period of Islam, and it was this emphasis that paved the way for the rise of Islam and decline of disbelief and disbelievers in those early periods.

Imitation in the era of Ijtihād

After the age of Tābi'ūn, begins the age of Mujtahidīn[36] and Fuqahā[37] who had authority to derive doctrines of Islam from its textual sources. It was these scholars whose juristic opinions later formed schools of jurisprudence and the masses adhered to their judgements in order to protect their religion from contradictions and carnal desires.

The matter of imitation held the same significance in this era as it had in the previous ones. That is to say that all four schools unanimously declared the imitation as unacceptable and forbidden.

Ḥanbalīs

The position of Ḥanbalīs concerning the imitation is clear from Ibn Taymiyyah's "*Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*".

(35) Ibid, 1:368.
(36) Mujtahidīn (plural form of Mujtahid): an individual who is qualified to exercise independent reasoning (Ijtihād) in the interpretation of Islamic law.
(37) Fuqahā (plural of Faqīh): a jurist, legal scholar, or expert in Islamic law.

Also, al-Dimyāṭī has recorded in his Book "*Ḥusn al-Siyar*" that Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has quoted the following fatwa from the popular book of Ḥanbalī school "*Kitāb al-Intiṣār*:

> "Whoever adopted outward appearance of disbelievers, tied *zunnār* or wore cross on his chest, he committed a forbidden act but did not become a disbeliever."

In brief, imitating disbelievers is explicitly forbidden when it is done in their religious symbols or special practices.

Mālikīs

Mālikīs are very strict in the matter of imitation. They do not only prohibit the imitation and emulation of disbelievers but also consider it forbidden to take oath, pray, or worship in any language other than Arabic. They even regard – as stated by Ibn Taymiyyah – slaughtering duck during the festival days of non-Muslims as similar to slaughtering pig.

It is mentioned in the popular book of Mālikī school "Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl" that: "If a Muslim clearly says that 'Uzayr (peace be upon him) is Allah's son, or says something that implies body and limitations for Allah, for example, he says: 'Allah is confined to one place', or he does something that is specific with non-Muslims, like wearing *zunnār* or Christian cap etc., then he becomes a disbeliever."(38)

Shāfi'īs

Al-Dimyāṭī has cited from Ibn Ḥajar al-Ḥaytamī's book "Al-I'lām bi Qawāt al-Islām" that:

(38) Muḥammad Abū 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad at-Ṭarābulsi al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Ru'yani, *Mawāhib al-Jalīl li-sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl* (Beirut: Dār 'Alam al-Kutub, 2003), 8:371.

> "If a Muslim dresses in the manner of disbelievers – no matter if he enters Dār al-Ḥarb or not – with approval of their religion, with inclination towards them, or while looking down upon Islam, then he becomes a disbeliever".

Ḥanafīs

Ḥanafīs are also very strict on this matter. It is mentioned in "Al-Ḥāwī" and "Al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyyah" that: "One becomes disbeliever by placing the Zoroastrian cap on his head, as per the stronger opinion."(39)

Overall, all four schools of jurisprudence are unanimous on the prohibition of imitating unbelievers. However, one may raise the question that: how can a person be labeled as disbeliever by just wearing the Zoroastrian or Christian cap, tying *zunnār,* or assuming the mere appearance of non-Muslims when he is not explicitly denying the Oneness of God, the Messengership of Muhammad, or other Islamic doctrines like Heaven and Hell? He is just emulating disbelievers in their outward appearance but he is a believer by heart.

To answer this question, we will only quote what Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī said in his commentary on Surah al-Baqarah:

> "Dressing in the attires of other religions, wearing z*unnār*, and other acts of imitations are regarded as kufr only because these actions imply lack of trust. For, a person who believes in the Messenger of Allah,

(39) Al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyyah (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1310 AH), 2:276.

> does not dare to do these things. It is not that these actions are kufr in themselves."

This makes it clear that these things or actions are not actually the acts of kufr (this is why if someone does it to make fun of disbelievers, it will be allowed). Yet, this type of imitation has been called disbelief because when someone dares to adopt their appearance in the open, it shows that Islamic appearance has no importance in his eyes rather he prefers to put on the non-Islamic look. And once he becomes so much fond of non-Islamic semblance and impression, there remains virtually nothing between him and plain kufr.

This is the reason why some Ḥanafīs have considered these acts as the acts of kufr while some others have treated these as indications of kufr. Even if we accept them as indications of kufr, they are nothing but a cover and hidden underneath is sheer unbelief.

Ṣūfīs

Ṣūfīs are devout people who are especially close to Allah. They do not seek concessions and relaxations given by Shariah law, and they are far above the general provisions of Shariah which are common for all; because their ideal is the life of Prophet and their role model is Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī.

No wonder they are even more strict on the matter of imitation than jurists. More often than not, they reject the bearing and demeanor – on the basis of prohibition of imitation – which do not fully conform to the Prophetic lifestyle even if general rules of Shariah allow that. Numerous things that may be permitted by *fatwā* (due to fulfilling minimum legal requirement) are disallowed by their *taqwā* (piety). They went so far in protecting the

boundaries of Islam as to confining the semblance of Muslims to the style of Arabs as that is the style of Prophet. All other styles belong to *'ajam* (non-Arabs) and, therefore, should be abandoned.

Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Gīlānī says: "Whatever is different from the clothing of Arabs and resembles that of the non-Arabs is disapproved".[40]

To sum up, the Quran is the first to prohibit imitation; then Aḥādīth enlarged on this topic; then Ṣaḥāba passed it on; then the experts of exoteric knowledge (Mujtahidīn and Fuqahā) as well as esoteric knowledge (Ṣūfīs) endorsed and upheld this principle. Thus, the idea of its prohibition is no longer a matter of blind faith or belief in hearsay, rather it has been well accepted and justified by logic and reason. Now, do Muslims of this age have no obligation towards such an established principle which has been substantiated by Quran, Hadith, traditions, jurisprudence, common practice, and wisdom; which has been diligently implemented by the Rightly Guided Caliphs throughout the Islamic territory; and which has been agreed upon by the Muslim Ummah in all the time periods? Are Muslims of this century not bound to abide by this true injunction of Islam? The answer to this question should not be in verbal 'yes' or 'no'. Rather, it should be in practical form. Instead of answering verbally, Muslims must answer through their actions and must defend this principle in front of non-Muslims. After all, upholding this principle is equivalent to upholding Islam. And it is impossible unless Muslims get rid of everything that makes them resemble disbelievers;

(40) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:400.

because making distinction from disbelief is one of the basic objectives of Islam.

Specifically, I call on the students of Islamic sciences not to let my voice go unheard. The advices given above hold far more importance for them, as they are the pillars of their society; the integrity of society depends on their integrity, and their corruption leads to the corruption of the whole society. Their slightest movement may lead to overall destruction of the world. Their small mistake may become an excuse for commoners to openly commit sins and violate the norms of Islam.

إذا كان رب البيت بالدف ضارباً

فشيمة أهل البيت كلهم الرقص

If the leader is breaking the rules, what should we expect from the followers?

Section Five: Is Islam only Based on Opposition of Disbelievers?

At this point, one question automatically pops up in minds: is Islam only based on opposition of other religions? Does Islam not have any foundation of its own? Is the only ambition of Islam to do the opposite of what others are doing? Is Islam all about such opposition and drawing contrast?

Let us take an example, the polytheists of Arab used to perform Ḥajj in a particular way; So, is the Islamic Ḥajj all about making some changes here and there and rearranging the activities performed during the Ḥajj, and in this way it becomes Islamic? If the reality of Islam is this, then actually Islam has no

real basis; because it implies that all other religions are founded on some bases while Islam relies on cherry-picking from other religions and altering and reshaping their teachings, which means that Islam has no true basis.

The reality, however, is that this question is baseless and a sheer misconception. The truth is that Islam is not founded on the opposition of disbelief, rather disbelief is founded on the opposition of Islam. Hence, Islam did not go against any religion, rather all other religions went against Islam.

> "And the parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree, uprooted from the earth, having no stability." [Ibrāhīm: 26]

In the beginning, when Adam and Iblīs were on the same religion, who was the first one to oppose and refuse out of arrogance, proclaiming "I am better than him", instead of complying and submitting? Indeed, it was Iblīs and not Adam. In fact, Adam had proved his obedience, subjugation and adherence to the true Islam by invoking "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves." [Al-A'rāf: 23]

So, it was Iblīs who created a religion against Islam which was completely based on self-obsession, arrogance, denial of truth, and delusion of "I am better than him". Hence, it is appropriate to say that the foundation of other religions has been laid on the opposition of Islam from the day one, not vice versa.

Even after descending to the earth, Adam remained steadfast in his obedience and the true religion of Islam which he had brought from the heaven while Iblīs maintained the same denying and arrogant attitude which he had shown in the heaven. So, just like heavenly world, the terrestrial world too

witnessed the fact that Islam's foundations are real whereas kufr relies on deviation from and opposition of truth.

Then, when disbelief found its way among the children of Adam, it again depended on the opposition of Islam. First time, the disbelief appeared in the seventh generation of Qābīl, and when Prophet Nūḥ (peace be upon him) was sent to uproot it, he called upon his people to return to compliance saying "I am Muslim".

> "I am ordered to be one of the Muslims (who submit themselves to Allah)" [An-Naml: 91]

If those people were not deviated from the religion of Adam and they had not created a new religion against Islam, why were they called back to Islam? Thus, even at the time of the first messenger and preacher of Islam after Adam, the actual religion was Islam and the disbelief was nothing but all about some heresies invented in opposition of Islam.

Then, from the times of Nūḥ to that of the final Prophet (peace be upon them all), whenever preachers of disbelief came out with their fabricated doctrines wrapped in deceivingly beautiful coverings, Islam always posed a challenge to them. Whenever the darkness of disobedience, deviation, and disbelief reached its peak, the light of prophethood was sent to this world to confront and eliminate that darkness. And every prophet proclaimed that he was Muslim and has brought the same religion of Islam which his people had abandoned.

The claim of Prophet Ibrāhīm before his people was also that he is a Muslim and an adherent of the religion of Adam and Nūḥ. The Holy Quran attested his claim:

> When his Lord asked him: "Be a Muslim," he answered: "I have become a Muslim to the Lord of the worlds. [Al-Baqarah: 131]

The prayer of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl after completing the construction of Ka'bah was to remain steadfast on the same religion of Islam which proves that Ismā'īl was also a Muslim.

> O Lord, make us both Muslims (submissive to You); and make our descendants a nation that will be Muslims (submissive to You). [Al-Baqarah: 128]

The last will of Ibrāhīm and Ya'qūb to their sons was also to stick to Islam till their last breath.

> This was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons and so did Jacob, when he said: "O my sons! Allah has chosen for you this Deen (way of life), therefore, die not unless you are Muslims. [Al-Baqarah: 132]

And the children of Ya'qūb proved their Islam by saying:

> We will worship the same One God Who is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, and to Him we all submit as Muslims. [Al-Baqarah: 133]

The supplication of Yūsuf to his Lord was:

> Make me die as a Muslim and admit me among the righteous. [Yūsuf: 101]

The address of Mūsā to his people was:

> O my people! If you sincerely believe in Allah, then put your trust in Him, if you are really Muslims. [Yūnus: 84]

The Quran has attributed the same religion of Islam to other prophets of Banī Isrā'īl as well, like Zakariya and Yaḥyā:

> Indeed We revealed the Torah to Moses, in which there is guidance and light: By its laws, all the Prophets, who were Muslims, judged those who call themselves. [Al-Mā'idah: 44]

In his letter to Bilqīs, Sulaymān wrote:

> Do not be arrogant against me and come to me in complete submission (as a Muslim). [An-Naml: 31]

And after embracing the religion of Sulaymān, i.e. Islam, Bilqīs said:

> Lord! Surely I have done injustice to myself, and I (now) surrender (i.e., I am a Muslim) with Sulayman to Allah, The Lord of the worlds. [An-Naml: 44]

The disciples of 'Īsā begged Allah to be witness of their Islam:

> Remember, when I inspired the disciples to have faith in Me and My Messenger and they said: 'We believe and bear witness that we have become Muslims. [Al-Mā'idah: 111]

At last, the Final Messenger of Allah declared that:

> Allah's guidance is the only guidance. We are commanded to surrender (become Muslims) to the Lord of the worlds. [Al-Baqarah: 71]

The Almighty Allah also announced that:

> Surely the only Deen (true religion and the Right Way of life) in the sight of Allah is Islam. [ʾĀl ʿImrān: 19]

And:

> If anyone is looking for a religion other than Islam, then let it be known that it will not be accepted from him; and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers. [ʾĀl ʿImrān: 85]

The notion that "the religion of all the prophets is one" is further elucidated by the Prophetic Hadith:

> Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary. The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.(41)

This is the reason why many verses of the Quran equate repudiation of one prophet with repudiation of all prophets, since the religion and the way of life of all the prophets is one. And for the same reason, every prophet not only testified his own prophethood but also testified that of all the preceding and succeeding prophets, and not only by himself but also he directed his followers to do the same.

In short, there has only been one real religion since the inception of this universe to the Final Prophet, and that is Islam. There have been changes in its form, shape, and surface details, but the central beliefs have essentially remained the same. It is one single ocean which distributes its nectar through various streams; and one single majestic

(41) Muḥammad bin Ismāʿīl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 3443.

figure which appears in varying costumes. As a Persian poet says:

بحریست متحد کہ باشکال مختلف   باراں و قطرہ و صدف و گوہر آمدہ
مشتق چو نیک درنگری عین مصدر است   کیں در صفات ظاہر خود مضمر آمدہ

> [Translation: The ocean is one from which emerge rain, droplet, and pearl in different forms. Their source is same which materializes with different attributes.]

For this reason, there is essentially no contradiction between Islam and other revealed religions (which were true religions at their times), since every revealed religion was an old edition of Islam and the basic doctrines were same in all of them.

یک چراغ ست دریں خانہ کہ از پرتو آں   ہر کجا می نگری انجمنے ساختہ اند

> [Translation: This great mansion of the universe has but one Lamp, and it is all due to its refracted light that you find so many centers of activity busy in plying their trade here, there and everywhere]

وما البحر إلا الموج لاشيء غيره
وإن فـرقتـه كثـرة المتعـدد

> [Translation: The ocean consists of nothing but waves; it is nothing without it. It is one entity even if divided by many.]

So, Islam is the first religion to emerge in this world and all other religions came into being as anti and opponents of Islam. Therefore, it is not Islam which is founded on opposition

of other religions, rather the foundation of all man-made religions has been against Islam. Considering this, if Islam stops its adherents from imitating others and obliges them to stick to its tenets, it only means that Islam is stopping them from going against itself; because Islam is self-standing while the existence of other religions depends on pick and choose. In fact, if any religion in the world contains anything good and virtuous, it has most certainly borrowed it from Islam even though they do not admit it.

What is wrong, I wonder, with those who embrace unfounded and detrimental tenets of other religions instead of the well-founded tenets of Islam, or those who choose to imitate the devil rather than modeling themselves on the prophets of Allah? These are the people whom Allah has complained about, as informed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

> "Allah expressed his anger at my Ummah and said: "I expelled Satan because of them and yet they disobey me and obey the Satan".(42)
>
> نظر دوست نادر کند سوئے تو   چو در روئے دشمن بود روئے تو
>
> [The Friend (God) will rarely look towards you, if you are inclined towards the enemy (Devil).]

Section Six: Degrees of Imitation from Juristic Viewpoint

Once it is established that the actual reason behind prohibiting imitation is to protect the Muslim nation from intermixture and to maintain the distinction between

(42) Ismāʻīl Ḥaqqī Ibn Muṣṭafā, *Rūḥ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 1:330.

Muslims and non-Muslims, it is also pertinent to clarify that the purpose of this prohibition is not to put the masses into difficulty or to suppress their natural urges and emotions. In fact, Islam can very well tolerate resemblance with non-Muslims in natural phenomena and, to some degree, in many areas of activities provided that Muslims manage to conserve their religious distinction. Below, we are going to present a juristic framework for different degrees of imitation which will spell out the details of imitation's permissibility and impermissibility, prohibition and distaste, approval and disapproval, as well as possibility and impossibility.

Human affairs, as a matter of fact, can be classified in two types: voluntary (*ikhtiyārī*) and involuntary (*iḍtirārī*).

Involuntary Affairs

Involuntary affairs are those which are beyond human control. For example, one's body structure, the shape of his body parts, his facial features, his inherent qualities and natural urges, such as hunger, thirst, the desire to eat and drink, the urge to cover his body, being instinctively social, the curiosity to know his Creator and to bow down to Him, and so on. These things are totally out of human control. He cannot do anything to get rid of these urges even if he wants to. He is forced to perform these acts without his free will. And he carries all these urges and desires starting from the point when he did not even understand the concept of compulsion and free will.

It goes without saying that Shariah does not dictate any ruling concerning such involuntary affairs. That is to say, if there happens to be a resemblance between Muslims and non-Muslims in such matters, the Shariah would not forbid such

resemblance. For instance, Muslims would not be directed to starve to death since non-Muslims habitually eat and drink; Or they would not be asked to cut their nose and ear since non-Muslims have them too; Or they would not be told to become animal since non-Muslims are humans. Such resemblance between believers and disbelievers is natural and, therefore, one is neither capable of eliminating this resemblance nor the presence of this similarity disrupts the boundaries of Islam or causes confusion and intermixture. It is not in any human's hand to become animal, or to convert from a sentient living being to an inanimate object. Moreover, the boundary lines among different species and genera are so distinctive and well-defined by the nature itself that no human intervention can possibly remove them or create a state of confusion: "We do not send it down except in a well-known measure" [Al-Ḥijr: 21]. Hence, it would have been totally pointless and illogical to prohibit imitation in order to prevent such an unlikely threat, and the Shariah sent down by Allah is free from such flaws.

So, the Islamic Shariah will deal with, and attempt to rectify, human actions, but it will not dictate any law about those human affairs that are directly governed by the Divine Wisdom.

It will not direct Muslims to stop eating and drinking to avoid imitation of disbelievers who do the same; since it is not under his control. But it will certainly order them to have a different way of eating and drinking so as to avoid total similarity, as the way one eats or drink is under his control.

It will not tell Muslims to abandon clothing altogether to avoid imitating disbelievers who cover their body with clothes; because wearing clothes is an involuntary action of human being. But it will certainly command them

to keep their clothing style different from that of other nations as it falls under their free-will.

It will never urge Muslims to cut their ear, nose, and other body parts looking at their similarity with disbelievers; for these body parts were not created by them. But it will certainly instruct them to groom and adorn themselves in a manner that is distinguishable from other nations, as it is totally in their hands.

It will never command Muslims to stop worshipping because non-Muslims also worship; since it is a natural instinct of human being to worship his Creator. But it will most certainly instruct them to make their way of worship totally separable from non-Muslim rituals, as they are totally free to choose their way of worship.

It will never ask them to give up the civilization itself because other nations are civilized; since leading a civilized and social life instead of roaming in jungles like animals is a basic human instinct. But it will most definitely demand from them to keep their culture and tradition different from those of others as it is very well in their control.

This elaboration, I suppose, should be enough to expose the ridiculousness and absurdity of the baseless objection (posed by people who have nothing to do except to raise objections and mock others) that: "If imitation of disbelievers is forbidden, then you must chop off your ear and nose, as disbelievers have them too, and you must give up sleeping or napping since they do it as well." What they mean to convey is that it is impossible to avoid imitation, and similitude among nations is a natural thing which ought to occur. However, what they fail to understand is that Shariah wants to maintain dissimilarity between Muslims and non-Muslims in their voluntary actions and not in involuntary

affairs. It desires to restrain 'human actions' from imitation and not 'Divine actions'.

We may also respond to these so-called 'enlightened' minds with a counterargument that: drawing analogy between involuntary 'resemblance' and voluntary 'imitation' and allowing the imitation of disbelievers based on this analogy is as absurd as comparing sexual intercourse between married couple with adultery and permitting the adultery based on this comparison, since both are similar in form and nature. If those enlightened souls agree on such analogy and comparison, then we might convince ourselves to consider their objection as well.

Natural Affairs

As a matter of fact, the issue of imitation has nothing to do with involuntary and coercive affairs, rather its concern is only with voluntary affairs just like other issues of Shariah. However, voluntary actions are of two types: natural (*ṭab'ī*) and obligatory (*qasrī*).

Natural actions are those which are performed out of free will, driven by one's natural instincts instead of external teaching and instruction. For example, eating and drinking etc. are natural affairs, because even though these are voluntary human actions, the driving forces behind them (hunger and thirst) are out of human control. So, these actions are although voluntary, they are stimulated by natural instincts, and hence they are involuntary in this sense. Therefore, Shariah does not prohibit imitation in such affairs.

Affairs Pertaining to Worship

Obligatory (*qasrī*) affairs are those which are even though driven by one's natural instincts, are also inspired by external

teaching and instruction. These affairs are further divided in two types: the ones pertaining to worship (*'ibādah*) and the ones related to custom and habit (*'ādah*). That is to say, the actions inspired by external teachings will either be related to worships and religious practices or to customs and habitual practices. In the first type (religious practices), the imitation is totally forbidden, for instance, wearing cross like Christians, wearing *zunnār* or marking forehead with color like Hindus, or wearing steel bangle like Sikhs. A strict ban on such imitations is necessary in order to keep religions from mixing together and to protect the true religion, Islam, from confusion and destruction.

Inherently Bad Practices

The affairs that are related to customs, habits, and general practices may further be classified in two types: the ones that are inherently and essentially immoral or evil, and the ones that are neutral.

If the practices are inherently immoral, the imitation in those practices is also impermissible. For example, wearing pants below the ankles, wearing silk, or any other foreign-to-Islam practice which implies admiration for false Gods. The reason is that besides involving imitation of disbelievers, these kinds of practices have been explicitly outlawed by Islam, as lowering one's garment below the ankles, wearing silk, and admiring false Gods are essentially against the injunctions of Islam.

Distinctive Signs of Other Nations

The affairs that are inherently neutral – neither good nor bad – will either be a distinctive sign and defining feature of another nation or not. If they are the sign or feature of any other nation,

the imitation in such affairs will also be close to definite prohibition (*ḥurmat*); which is defined by Muslim Jurists as *makrūh taḥrīmi*. For instance, clothing that is specific to a certain faith or community, which is attributed specifically to that faith and anyone wearing that clothing is considered by default a member of that community. For example, the particular design of cap that Christians wear, or catchphrase of a specific community etc.

Things that Have Alternatives

Things that are not distinctive sign or feature of a particular community have two possibilities: either Muslims will have alternatives for those things or they will not have. If there is an alternative available in Islam, then imitation in those affairs is disliked (*makrūh*); because our self-respect requires us to avoid foreign objects for which we have substitutes at our disposal, because imitating others despite having a substitute is equivalent to bringing ourselves down and making ourselves unnecessarily dependent on others.

The following incident from the life of Prophet (PBUH) sheds light on the same fact:

> It was narrated that ‘Alī said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had an Arabian bow in his hand, and he saw a man who had a Persian bow in his hand. He said: ‘What is this? Throw it away. You should use this and others like it, and Qana spears. Perhaps Allah will support His religion thereby and enable you to conquer lands.’”[43]

(43) Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 2810.

The Prophet (PBUH) insisted on throwing away the Persian bow because Muslims had an indigenous alternative for that. So, he ordered to stop using it in order to create every possible distinction between Muslims and other people so that a Muslim remains visibly different from others in each and every aspect. Otherwise, if a man intentionally looks away from the treasure that Islam contains to pursue the balderdash thrown by other religions, this situation is what a Persian poet describes as:

یک سپد پر نان ترا بر فرق سر　　تو ہمی خواہی لب نان در بہ در
تا بزانوئے میان آب جو　　غافل از خود زین و آن تو آب جو

> [With a basket full of bread on the top of your head, you go from door to door asking for the rind of the bread.
>
> While you are in the water in the brook up to your knees, overlooking yourself you will be continually asking everyone for water.]

Things that Do Not Have Alternatives

However, if foreign objects are of such kind for which Muslims do not have any substitute, such as modern inventions of Europe, latest weaponry, and the facilities rendered by modern technological advancement, then there are two possibilities: either these things are used with an intention of imitation, or they are used without any such intention. In the first form, their usage is impermissible; because deliberately and purposefully imitating disbelievers indicates one's heartfelt inclination towards them, and such inclination has no place in Islam. Rather, it is something that may even strip one of his faith.

> And do not be inclined to the wrongdoers or you will be touched by the Fire. For then you would have no protectors other than Allah, nor would you be helped. [Hūd: 113]

Furthermore, blind adherence of non-Muslims can never lead a Muslim to success and prosperity, just like adherence of darkness can never increase the brilliance of light, the adherence of illness can never bring health, and adherence of anything can never strengthen its opposite. Having said that, if these foreign objects are not used with the intention of imitation but they are used purely for their material benefits, then there is no objection from Shariah as long as the usage is limited to the extent of necessity.

Precaution and Safety Measure

It is important to point out that the above mentioned differences among various degrees of imitation are in terms of theory and knowledge. In practice, however, a Muslim is advised to avoid imitation in any form and extent as a precautionary measure. The reason is that every culture and civilization consists of a series of customs and traditions tied together. Every custom is linked to another custom. So, adopting one custom means opening the door for other customs to creep in, which may ultimately result in embracing the whole culture. Therefore, in terms of practice, Muslims are warned against imitation in all its degrees; whether it is *ḥarām, makrūh taḥrīmi*, or *makrūh tanzīhi*; because it is one of the important features of Islamic Shariah that it urges its adherents to refrain even from doubtful matters whose legal status (permissibility or impermissibility) is uncertain, since such matters may possibly be attributed to either side, and thus, it is quite possible that one takes these

matters lightly and he ends up in the ditch of *ḥarām*. The following hadith elaborates on the same fact:

> Both legal and illegal things are evident but in between them there are doubtful (suspicious) things and most of the people have no knowledge about them. So whoever saves himself from these suspicious things saves his religion and his honor. And whoever indulges in these suspicious things is like a shepherd who grazes (his animals) near the Hima (private pasture) of someone else and at any moment he is liable to get in it. (O people!) Beware! Every king has a Hima and the Hima of Allah on the earth is His illegal (forbidden) things.[44]

This hadith is a warning that one must be content with permissible and lawful things. And not only with doubtful matters, many pious and God fearing men sometimes even avoid things which are neither explicitly forbidden by Shariah nor there is a cautionary advice, but they avoid them either because in their insight those matters seem to have a remote connection with a Shariah interdict, or because they fear that despite being perfectly lawful, those things might be a prelude to something prohibited. As stated in a hadith:

> The Messenger of Allah said: "Whatever intoxicates in large quantities, a little of it is unlawful."[45]

(44) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 52.

(45) Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā at-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ at-Tirmidhī*, Book of Drinks, Hadith 1865.

Although small quantity is not intoxicating, but this small quantity may lead to consuming large quantity, and for this reason it has been declared unlawful.

The same message is conveyed by another hadith:

> Whoever goes to a fortuneteller or soothsayer and believes what he says has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).(46)

In truth, believing in what a fortuneteller or soothsayer says and acting accordingly is an act of disbelief, but merely going to him or passing by him is not actually an act of *kufr*. However, since going and passing by him may lead to listening, believing, and then acting upon what he says, going close to him has been prohibited altogether.

This was the reason Umm al-Mu'minīn ʿĀʾishah used to say: "beware of seemingly insignificant sins"(47), because committing small sins often becomes a prelude to committing major ones.

For the same reason, the Holy Quran not only prohibited *zinā* (unlawful sexual intercourse) but also blocked the path leading to it by saying: "And do not go near *zinā*" [Al-Isrā': 32]. The meaning is: do not even go near things that lead to *zinā*, such as touching, kissing, smelling, being close, and being alone, for all these things are strong causes that lead to the greater evil which is *zinā*.

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(46) Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd Allāh Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmiyyah, 1990), 1:49, Hadith no. 15.

(47) Imām Aḥmad has recorded this Hadith on the authority of ʻAbd Allāh ibn Masʻūd narrating from the Prophet (PBUH) in his Musnad, no. 3818.

Due to the same factor, the Holy Quran used the following words to prevent from crossing the limits set by Allah: “These are the limits set by Allah, so do not go near them.” [Al-Baqarah: 187] That is, even though going near the limits was not a sin in itself, it might encourage one to crossing them. Therefore, even going close has been forbidden.

When the Prophet of Allah told his companions not to ask anything from anyone except Allah, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq refrained from asking people to even pick up his whip that he dropped while riding the horse, rather he came down himself and picked it up. Although such request was allowed, he feared that this might be remotely related to the prohibited kind of request. So, he refrained even from that to be on the safe side.

When the Almighty ordered Muslims to lower their voices in front of the Prophet by revealing: “O believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak loudly to him as you do to one another” [Al-Ḥujurāt: 2], ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who had a loud voice began to speak so softly that he became almost inaudible. Even though the above verse did not require them to speak in such a low pitch, it was the fear of God and their precautionary attitude that compelled them to give up even those lawful things which may clear the way for unlawful things.

All in all, there are textual rulings about many affairs that are essentially lawful but have been declared unlawful in order to block the way to strictly forbidden affairs, such as the issues of grazing near private pasture, little amount of intoxicants, going to fortunetellers, going near *zinā*, committing minor sins, approaching the limits of Allah,

raising voice, and asking favor from people. In the same manner, general principles of Shariah and many textual evidences suggest the same about the issue of imitation. That is to say, just like it is necessary to avoid prohibited types of imitation, it is also important to refrain from some permissible degrees of imitation so that one may not reach the degree of forbidden. “it is indeed hard except for those who fear Allah.” [Al-Baqarah: 45]

In the above lines, I have so far cast light on the effect of imitation in altering and ultimately eliminating the original identity of nations, and then I discussed in detail various degrees of imitation from the perspective of Islamic Jurisprudence. I have put in my best efforts to keep the discussion as simple as I could and to bring supporting ideas from scriptures, traditions, logic, as well as physical and material world. By the grace of Almighty, I have been successful in elucidating the subject as much as needed, and it has been well established that the insistence of Islamic Shariah on avoiding the imitation of others does not originate from self-glorification, intolerance, and bigotry. Rather it is based on self-esteem, self-regard, a sense of self-preservation, and realization that no nation deserves to be called a ‘nation’ unless it has a firm and unchangeable identity and its distinctive characteristics are well protected. Since it is only Islam whose distinctive characteristics are firm, unchangeable, and everlasting, it is only Islam that has the right to eliminate all other nationhoods, to merge them all in itself, and to paint them with its own color. In other words, it is only Islam that deserves to boldly put a ban on the imitation of others in order to draw a dividing line between its people and other nations.

Had Islam not imposed restrictions on the imitation (which endangers the very existence of nations and opens the door of disbelief and infidelity) and had it not introduced the measures to curb it, it would have been a stain on its perfectly beautiful face. However, just like Islam is free from every defect and shortcoming, it is also free from the shortcoming with regard to the matter of imitation.

Islam has given sufficient amount of attention to the issue of imitation, and in the upcoming sections we shall prove, by the will of Allah, that Islam has laid down a comprehensive set of instructions that deal with the issue of imitation in each and every aspect of life, be it related to belief or worship, normal life or commercial and political life, crimes or punishment, culture or civilization, ethics or moral values, household or social environment, manners or etiquettes of eating, drinking, sleeping, and meeting, and then all those physical as well as spiritual states that come upon a human being in different situations and environments. The teachings of Islam cover all directions of human life, as if the ideals of Islam as a whole caution against imitation of other nations, but its warning is beneficial only for those fortunate ones who were chosen by the Omniscient Allah to pay heed to it.

After explaining the origin and theoretical framework of imitation, we now move to discuss its empirical aspect which will unveil the practical framework of this issue.

Chapter Two

Application of the Concept of Imitation

This chapter comprises three sections:

Section one: Imitation and defining features of a person

Section two: Additional body parts and 'fulfilment of the words of Allah'

Section three: Bodily needs: clothing and fashion

Section One: Imitation and Defining Features of a Person

The most significant signs that set a human being apart from other people are the identifying features of his body, such as his body shape, facial features, size and shape of his body parts, skin tone, and other identifying marks on the body. These are the features that define a person and the community or race he belongs to. Islam has given clear guidelines concerning the beautification and adornment of body parts that, on the one side, ensure the preservation of natural formation with all its simplicity, and on the other side, the purpose of beautification is accomplished to an adequate level, and at the same time, a Muslim remains visibly different from non-Muslims.

Characteristics of Natural Disposition (*Khiṣāl al-Fiṭrah*)

In order to guide the human behavior pertaining to beautification and personal grooming, Islam has introduced a comprehensive system of *"Khiṣāl al-Fiṭrah"* (characteristics of natural disposition) and has strictly prohibited any change or alteration in this system on the basis of human desire. This system consists of a set of instructions that govern both primary as well as additional parts of the body. About the primary parts, it insists on preserving the body on its natural state, while about the additional parts, it commands to remove the overgrown portions.

To elaborate, once a human body is grown to its full potential, some parts of the body stop developing; these parts neither grow further nor shrink – such as, height, skin, limbs, and color etc. After he reaches adulthood, none of these

components increase or decrease in size on their own. If some external factor causes a change in the size of body constituents, like a change in the environmental or health conditions, that will be a different thing. But in general, all the components of body become immune to biological changes after adulthood. These are the components that we have termed as 'primary body parts'.

There is another section of human body that keeps growing till his death, for example, hair and nails, as these two do not stop developing even after adulthood. Neither these parts of the body stop at any limit nor are they immune to biological changes. These are the components that we have termed as 'additional body parts'.

Islamic Shariah has given two different sets of instructions for these two categories. Since primary body parts are safe from biological changes, the Shariah has disallowed making any alteration or modification to them from our side. We are not allowed to attempt enlargement or reduction of any organ, to incapacitate a limb, or to replace the natural color and skin tone with artificial color, like European culture promotes eye enlargement through surgery, replacing crooked teeth with artificial ones, plastic surgery to modify the shape of face and facial components, and attempts to correct – God forbid – the creation of Allah through various beauty products and cosmetics.

Obviously, these ridiculous attempts are for nothing but to change the creation of Allah. These are Satanic acts in the words of Glorious Quran:

> (Satan said:) "I will order them and they will alter Allah's creation." And whoever takes Satan as a guardian instead of Allah has

> certainly suffered a tremendous loss. [An-Nisā’: 119]

The strict prohibition of altering the creation of Allah is to proclaim that the formation of primary body parts has been completed by the Creator, and since the Creator Himself did not feel the need to make any changes to His creation, the creatures like us have no right to even think of any such change. If men dare to take up this task, it will mean that they deem the perfect work of Allah as imperfect and they find a scope of improvement in His flawless creation. This is indeed a grave offence and an unforgivable blasphemy of the Almighty.

On the contrary, the perpetual growth of additional body parts signifies that the Creator has not put a limit for their development. Therefore, grooming, trimming, and cleaning these body parts within the permissible limits is not an act of disrespect, rather it is a fulfillment of the objective of Islam which is purely an act of obedience and worship. Thus, cutting additional body parts, like hair and nails, is not considered as altering the creation of Allah. Rather it has been termed as ‘fulfilling the words of Allah’ in the words of the Noble Quran:

> “When God tested Abraham with certain words (commandments) and he fulfilled them.” [Al-Baqarah: 124]

The commandments with which Prophet Ibrāhīm was tested and which he fulfilled owing to his pure nature (*fiṭrah*) are: circumcision, shaving pubic hair, trimming the mustache, paring nails and plucking the hair from armpit; all from the additional body parts in which mankind are free to make changes. And since man performs these tasks in

compliance to the Divine commandments, these acts have been termed as the 'words of Allah', and the reward announced for Prophet Ibrāhīm upon fulfilling these words was the status of 'vicegerent of Allah' and 'leader of the mankind'. Quran stated: "Indeed I am going to appoint you a leader of all people." [Al-Baqarah: 124]

In summary, any modification in the fully grown parts of the body is strictly forbidden and is considered 'alteration in the creation of Allah', whereas trimming and clipping of perpetually growing parts is desirable and is called 'fulfilling the words of Allah'. Thus, preserving the natural formation is necessary in the former and fulfilling the words of Allah is important in the latter.

Coming to the point, this is now evident that altering the creation of Allah in the primary body parts, or not fulfilling the words of Allah in additional body parts, is tantamount to imitating others which has been called a 'Satanic act' in the language of the Quran. On the contrary, preserving the creation of Allah and fulfilling his words actually equal to imitating the Prophets which is a godly act because of its compliance to the rules of God.

Therefore, the reality of imitation in one's defining features emerges from looking at the deeds of the enemies of Allah who either change their natural formation altogether or want to modify something in their original appearance. One group opposes the commands of Allah and the other acts against His words. One alters the creation of God and the other changes His words. And since 'natural' is what Allah has created, intervening with his creation or violating his commandments is 'unnatural', and therefore, the actions of the enemies of Islam are against the 'nature'. On the opposite

side, grooming and adorning oneself in accordance to His commands are natural acts, and thus, the actions of the friends of Allah are in harmony with the nature. Hence, all the Muslims are obligated to oppose the enemies of Allah by abandoning their imitation and to follow the path of His friends by emulating them, so that the natural disposition is manifested with its original characteristics.

Based on this, Islam has offered universal and comprehensive guidelines regarding both primary and additional body parts, which we have already discussed in the previous section in the light of the Quran. Apart from that, it has also given detailed instructions regarding the application of these guidelines, which we are going to explore in the following sections.

Section Two: Additional Body Parts and Fulfilment of the Words of Allah

We begin our exploration with face and its components as it is the most prominent part of human body.

Beard and Facial Hair

Facial hairs contribute a lot to the attractiveness of face. They also make distinction between feminine beauty and masculine charm. Hairs have secured an important place in the modern culture. Plenty of machines and hairstyling products are available for trimming, grooming, and giving different styles to the hair. There are big salons that charge a hefty amount for hairdressing. Rich people regularly spend a big chunk of their wealth on hair maintenance.

Beard is the most prominent feature of a man’s face which makes him look attractive and graceful. Different

communities and cultures have different views about beard that stem from both religious and cultural orientations. Some consider it vital for masculine beauty while others feel that shaving it off adds more charm to the face.

Generally, Christians and Zoroastrians as a cultural practice, and many idolaters as a religious practice, prefer shaving the beard. On the opposite, Sikhs, Jews, and Yogis insist on keeping beard and leaving it untouched. Regardless of the reasons and arguments of both sides, the point of our discussion on the topic of imitation is that Islam has introduced a middle path between the two extremes. It ordained to keep the beard in order to eliminate imitation of the first group, and at the same time prescribed a limitation for its length so that it does not resemble the beards of the second group.

About keeping the beard, the Messenger of Allah ordered as narrated by Ibn 'Umar: "Be different from *mushrikīn* (polytheists), trim your moustaches and leave your beards."(48) In another narration: "Trim closely the moustache, and grow beard, and thus act against the fire-worshippers."(49)

These traditions put emphasis on acting differently from polytheists and fire-worshippers which demonstrates that being different from disbelievers in general is an important objective of Islam, and thus, keeping beard appears to be obligatory for Muslims. Also, these traditions are clear indication that shaving beard is forbidden, since there is a popular maxim in Islamic jurisprudence that

(48) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Hadith no. 259.
(49) Ibid, 260.

"ordering something implies prohibition of its opposite", i.e. when something is made obligatory, neglecting it becomes prohibited automatically. Therefore, since the hadith above necessitates keeping beard, not keeping it (whether by shaving it completely or just maintaining a stubble look) becomes prohibited. Otherwise, if shaving the beard was allowed, then the injunction of growing it would have been pointless, as it would have had contradictory implications.

Anyway, the Shariah wants Islamic faces to be visibly different from non-Islamic ones when it comes to the most prominent facial component, i.e. beard, so that the former does not follow the pattern of the latter, as following others signifies weakness and flaw on the follower's part.

These traditions should serve as a deterrent for those who shave their beards not only as a fashion or to fulfill their desires but also to openly imitate disbelievers. It seems that their only goal is to contravene this important objective of Islam, i.e. acting differently from disbelievers. May Allah protect us all from such evil doing.

Furthermore, shaving beard does not only lead to imitation of unbelievers but also to imitation of women. While the former removes differences among nations, the latter eliminates distinctions between genders. Additionally, the imitation of women sometimes induces femininity and womanly qualities inside a man; because inclination to a particular form often means inclination to its underlying essence. In fact, one naturally leans to a reality from the beginning and as soon as this reality manifests itself in a specific form, he starts to get fascinated by this form. So, the natural leaning starts from inside and later appears outside. The heart is preoccupied with the essence and is

continuously in the search for its material form. As soon as the form appears, the pre-existing emotions are triggered and draw the heart to that form.

Based on this, it can be said that those who make their faces look like women by shaving beard are either drawn from feminine appearance to feminine qualities, or they were already inclined to femininity and as soon as they saw feminine faces, their instincts were stimulated and they got attracted to the same faces in which their hearts were already engrossed.

Whatever the process, emulating women causes femininity and softness to reflect on the face instead of manliness and masculinity, and it also instills tenderness and timidity in the heart instead of vigor and bravery. As a result, such people begin to show womanly traits, like slyness, trickery, deception, double-dealing, and hypocrisy instead of manly characteristics, honesty and bravery. Similarly, they start to prefer comfort-seeking, luxury, fashion following, and adorning oneself, over manly simplicity and modesty.

This is the reason why Islam has made it forbidden for men to emulate women without any exception or limitation, so that the characteristics and needs of both genders do not mix together. The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said:

> "Allah cursed men who imitate women and women who imitate men."(50)

In short, these two types of imitations – imitation of disbelievers and imitation of women – affect the face first and then affect the heart. The ill-effects of these two imitations are quite evident for those who are endowed with wisdom and insight. That is why Islam has ordered its

(50) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Hadith no. 3151.

followers to grow beard in opposition of other nations who are fond of shaving it off.

As for the doubt that growing beard makes Islamic faces resemble the faces of those who keep the beard and mustache as religious obligation, like Sikhs and Jews, so Islam has solved this by ordering to trim mustaches, since these people refrain from trimming beards and mustaches alike. This is why the above mentioned hadith instructed to trim mustaches immediately after ordering to keep beard, which fulfills the purpose of maintaining the distinction between the faces of Muslims and non-Muslims. And since some communities have tradition of clipping the mustaches as well, like Jews and Kayasths among Hindus, Islam has allowed to trim the hairs of beard that exceed a fist-length to maintain the difference, for these communities have no custom of pruning or grooming overgrown beards. It has been narrated from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-'Āṣ:

> “The Prophet (ﷺ) used to take from his beard;
> from its breadth and its length.”[51]

The adherence to these limitations with regards to beard makes a Muslim appear different from the people of all other faiths and make him resemble the Prophets of Allah. It draws distinction between the faces of a believer and a non-believer.

That said, if a non-Muslim attempts to appear like Muslims, it implies that he is coming close to Islam and far from his religion and tradition. Thus, we are not required to be different from him as he himself is imitating us; if we distance ourselves from him, we will actually be distancing ourselves from our own religious identity.

(51) At-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith no. 2762.

Nape Hair

The hair that grow on the nape of the neck are also part of facial hair; because in general usage, the word ‘face’ is applied to the whole area that is above the neck. So, the entire head from all four directions is included in the face, and therefore, the same rules of Shariah that concern the face are applicable to the back of the neck.

Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal prohibited shaving the nape area calling it a practice of Zoroastrians:

> Al-Marwazī said: I asked Abū ‘Abd Allāh – i.e., Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal – about the shaving of the nape. He replied that it was one of the practices of the Zoroastrians and that he who imitates a people belongs to that people.(52)

Then, Imām Aḥmad also informed about his own practice in order to convey the message more strongly: “As for me, I do not shave my nape”, and said: “Shaving of the nape is indeed a Zoroastrian practice”.(53)

Mu‘tamar bin Sulaymān al-Taymī narrates that his father Sulaymān was repulsive of shaving his nape when cutting his hair. He was asked the reason, to which he replied: “He disliked to resemble the non-Arabs”.(54)

Also, a *mursal*(55) tradition has been cited by Ibn Taymiyyah about Prophet’s revulsion to this act. These examples show that the predecessors of this Ummah were

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(52) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:205.
(53) Ibid.
(54) Ibid, 1:207.
(55) *Mursal*: is a terminology in hadith sciences referring to a narration in which the link between the Successor (*tābi‘ī*) and the Prophet (PBUH) is missing.

very cautious and vigilant even about small matters when it came to the issue of imitation. This attitude may not be very commendable in the eyes of modern apologetic Muslims, but those who are gifted with cognizance and foresight along with upright nature look at this attitude as protection of boundary, blocking the means of disbelief, and preservation of national identity which are inevitable for every nation under the law of the nature.

Forelock

Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal's standpoint of universal prohibition of imitation entails that today's Muslims will be barred from maintaining the Western hairstyle in which only the forelock – i.e., hairs that grow just above the forehead – are kept and the rest of the head is shaved off. This hairstyle is their national and religious symbol, sporting which indicates one's leaning and inclination towards them, while the Glorious Quran has strictly warned against any form of inclination towards these people.

> "And do not be inclined to the wrongdoers or you will be touched by the Fire." [Hūd: 113]

The reason is that leaning towards wrongdoers is a wrongdoing in itself, and therefore, Muslim are suggested to stay away from such misdeed.

Qaza' (leaving a tuft of hair and shaving the rest)

In the same manner, shaving some part of head and leaving the other part (which has been termed as *qaza'* by the Prophet) is forbidden as it is a form of mutilation or disfiguring the body. Many nations, in the past and present, have been involved in this practice in various forms until it

became their national symbol. In the past, Romans and Persians used to customarily shave the middle part of the head and leave the rest, while in the modern culture, the back of the head and the area above the ears are shaved so that the forehead looks bigger and wider. The Prophet has ordered to avoid this practice too in order to remain distinct from others.

> "Ibn Umar reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) forbade *qaza'*. I said to Nafi: What is *qaza'*? He said: This means having a part of a boy's head shaved and leaving a part unshaven."[56]

Dying Hair

It has been pointed out before that facial hairs are a prominent component of a man's face and this is why Islam has prescribed some limitations which ensure that the faces of Muslims do not resemble that of non-Muslims. Now, the next question is about grooming and upkeep of the hair itself. In this too, the Shariah did not tolerate any kind of resemblance with other nations. For example, Jews and Christians were habitual of keeping the grey hair in their old age. So, the Shariah advised Muslims who had white beard to dye their hair so that no similarity remains even in the color. Imām Nasā'ī reported in his *Al-Sunan* that the Messenger of Allah said: "Change gray hair, but do not imitate the Jews."[57]

Imām Aḥmad gave concession in this regard and suggested to dye hair at least once in the whole life so that this *Sunnah* of the Prophet is fulfilled. This demonstrates the

(56) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Hadith no. 2120.
(57) Aḥmad ibn Shu`ayb al-Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, Hadith no. 5073.

significance as well as the non-compulsion of dying hair. Imām Aḥmad even said to his father who had grey hair: "O Abū Hāshim, dye your hair even if only once. I wish you dyed your hair and did not look like a Jew."(58)

Anyway, the Prophetic command of dying hair is also meant to avoid imitation of disbelievers, which further proves that looking and acting differently from unbelievers is an established objective of Islam. The following tradition recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* casts light more clearly on the same purpose of hair dye. The Prophet of Allah said:

> "Jews and Christians do not dye their hair, so you should do the opposite of what they do."(59)

The choice of words and turn of phrase in this Hadith entail some subtle points which further elucidate the issue of imitation and highlight the sensitivity and significance of the matter.

1- If the objective of hadith was solely to ensure opposition of disbelievers, the words chosen would have been something like: "Jews and Christians do not dye their hair, so you should dye your hair". But instead of saying 'you should dye your hair', the hadith said 'you should do the opposite of what they do'. This shift from specific to general instruction is a clear indication that the objective of the hadith is also general, that is, to be different from infidels in all our practices, or else this shift would become pointless. So, the general instruction of opposing disbelievers signifies that opposing them in dying hair is not enough, rather

(58) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:201.
(59) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 5899; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Hadith no. 2103.

Muslims are required to do the opposite of what they do in everything, be it dying hair or other matters. Therefore, this single hadith is enough to outlaw all the practical forms of imitation, and to necessitate all such measures that are taken to remain different from unbelievers.

2- This is a well-known maxim of Islamic Jurisprudence that when a general injunction is enjoined through specific words, that specific case constitutes the cause of the general injunction. Moreover, it is also an established principle that just as this specific case is itself included in the general injunction, it does not prevent other things from being included in the broader scope of the same injunction; because specific nature of the mentioned case does not harm the universal applicability of the legal decree.

For instance, we warn a person who is going to commit adultery by saying: "Fear Allah!" Obviously, the motive behind saying this at this particular moment is to deter him from committing adultery, which is indeed embodied in our exhortation to him to fear God. Yet, it does not prevent other such deeds wherein fearing God is required from being included in this exhortation, since the expression used here is general and of universal applicability. Therefore, as much the advice of fearing God is meant to deter him from adultery, in the same proportion in is meant to prevent him from committing theft, robbery, intoxication, murder and other crimes.

In brief, the general nature of a Shariah injunction demands multiple applications even though the incident that prompted the revelation of

this injunction was specific. The specific incident does not annul the universal applicability of the Shariah decree.

Keeping it in view, the hadith cited above calls for acting differently from disbelievers using the general expression 'do the opposite of what they do', while the context of this decree is specific, i.e., dying hair. So, dying hair to oppose disbelievers is itself included in this decree, and at the same time, it will not prevent other opposing actions from being included in the same decree. Besides this, the general wording of the injunction "do the opposite" demands for opposing disbelievers in all the actions in addition to dying hair. Hence, this single hadith is a sufficient evidence to rule out the imitation in all forms, whether it is related to one's identifying features, incidental properties, or defining characteristics.

3- The usage of general expression of 'doing the opposite' instead of specific order of 'dying hair' implies, on the one hand, the absolute prohibition of imitation, and on the other, it makes clear that the cause of this prohibition is to oppose unbelievers. In this way, opposing disbelievers proves to be a distinct objective of Islam. For it is a well-established maxim of Islamic Jurisprudence that in imperative expressions, when a person is referred to by his status or attribute instead of his name, that status or attribute constitutes the basis and cause for the imperative command. For example, we want everyone to give respect to Zayd who is a great scholar, so instead of saying, "Respect Zayd" we say, "Respect the scholar". So, our choice of words in this example

clearly indicates that our purpose is not only to seek respect for Zayd, but also to point out the reason for seeking respect, i.e., being scholar. It implies that we want respect for Zayd because of his scholarship only.

In the same manner, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) did not say, "Jews and Christians do not dye their hair, so you should dye your hair", rather he used a more general approach and said: "Jews and Christians do not dye their hair, so you should do the opposite of what they do" clearly indicating that his aim is not only to order hair dying, but also to point out the basis and cause for this order, i.e., the opposition of Jews and Christians.

One more point that can be inferred from this Hadith is that the emphasis is on avoiding the resemblance of disbelievers rather than on dying hair. In other words, dying hair is not as much an important objective of Islam as opposing the customs of other faiths is. The reason is that this kind of legal injunctions that cover many specific cases have two aspects: one aspect is of the specific cases to which the injunction may be applied, and the other aspect is of the general injunction and blanket ruling that encompasses those specific cases. Obviously, the general injunction and blanket ruling holds primary status while those specific cases have subsidiary position and serve as branches for the primary ruling. More precisely, those subsidiary rulings concerning the specific forms are decreed only because they contain the primary injunction. If specific forms and cases do not contain the general injunction or they begin to cause the opposite of the primary ruling, the specific ruling will turn into forbidden. It entails that the general injunction is required primarily and for its own sake, whereas its specific forms are supplementary that owe their existence to the former.

Let us take an example, we have a guest and it is time for dinner, so we order the servant to 'offer hospitality' to the guest referring to making arrangement for their meal. Here, the general injunction and primary order is to offer hospitality to the guest, and this is what essentially required by this command. As for offering meal, it is one of the forms of hospitality just like there are other forms, such as entertaining the guest, taking care of his needs, treating him with respect, caring for his comfort, and protecting him from slightest discomfort. All these treatments are manifestations of hospitality while honoring the guest is the real objective of these treatments. However, if the above treatments begin to reflect insult instead of respect, that is to say, these things are performed in a derogatory manner, in that case they will certainly become condemnable and deplorable actions rather than being praiseworthy.

Therefore, the merit and demerit of the above-mentioned treatments depend upon the presence and absence of the general injunction or primary ruling. So, these specific forms are required only because they manifest that primary ruling. Thus, it can be concluded that the general injunction is the real objective which also serves as the effective cause for the specific rulings.

In the same manner, the Prophetic command 'do the opposite of what they do' is a general injunction and a blanket rule, and therefore, it is the real objective of the hadith. As for dying hair, it is one of the manifestations of the above rule, and hence, it is also indirectly required.

To sum up, all the specific forms of imitations that have been declared forbidden by various imperative traditions of the Prophet, they all culminate in one inclusive

principle, that is, being different from disbelievers in every possible way; avoiding their semblance in both appearance and behavior; and preserving the true Islamic identity, so that a Muslim can easily be distinguished from a non-Muslim and the outward look of a Muslim itself becomes an introduction of his religion, culture, and nation.

At last, we have discussed the stance of Shariah concerning trimming and shaving beard, nape hair, forelock, *qaza'*, and hair dye as examples of imitation in one's identifying features and personal traits. The discussion proves that the issue of imitation is not purely theoretical, rather it has many practical implications with plenty of its examples scattered in the Islamic law. And since the lawgiver has decreed clear rules in this regard, no one has the right, or need for that matter, to define its meaning and scope.

Section Three: Bodily Needs: Clothing and Fashion

The Philosophy of Clothing

The Messenger of Allah said: "Wear clothes, as long as that does not involve any extravagance or vanity."[60]

When we explore clothing habits of various nations that exist across the planet, we find striking difference in the clothes and clothing styles of each nation. Apart from that, we even find differences among various classes and divisions that exist within the nation, such as villager and city-dweller, nobleman and low-born, religious and irreligious, literate and illiterate, pious and impious; Everyone has his distinct taste of clothing. Some of them wear loose clothes and some wear tight fitting

(60) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 3605.

dresses. Some prefer bright colors and some prefer simple and sober. Some are clothed in soft and silky and some put on rough and crude.

Then, there are those who keep changing and developing their clothing according to the latest trends and fashions, and there are others who are fond of classics and spend their whole life in one dressing style. In other words, some individuals stick to their traditional and cultural attires, while others get impressed by foreign cultures and prevailing trends and believe that change is necessary for progress and development of their community.

In short, every community has its own dressing style which, on the one side, ensures that it remains distinguishable from other communities, and on the other, it serves as the identity mark and defining feature of that community. Moreover, just as this variation in clothing manifests visible and outwards differences among various classes and groups, it also indicates differences in terms of nature, inherent character, and mindset. If all the people had the same mindset and were inclined to the same dress, there would have been no variation in clothing styles.

This fact leads us to believe that differences in attire originate from internal tendencies and natural urges. One's intrinsic liking and inclination take on the form of garbs and produce various styles and fashions. However, every human tendency or urge is rooted in any of the innate qualities or dispositions (*khulq* pl. *akhlāq*) without which that tendency can neither emerge nor can it show its effects on human behavior. For example, humble behavior originates from humility; love for fame and status arises from arrogance; modesty and abstinence is rooted in chastity; and the acts of

giving and donating emanate from generosity. In the same manner, the urge of keeping up with fashion and latest trends in one's clothing must also be based on an intrinsic quality or disposition which stimulates this urge to adopt new styles.

In a nutshell, it is quite evident that actual inspiration to choose a dress comes from inside; from intrinsic qualities or faculties that affect one's clothing habit through his interest and liking. It can be said that clothing styles are manifestations of those qualities and dispositions; Or the qualities themselves take on the form of clothes.

Thus, clothing is a materialized form, physical depiction, and a reflection of internal tendencies and inherent characteristics. When a particular kind of characteristics take root in a community, that community instinctively adopts a specific style of clothing and it automatically develops a liking for that style.

To put it another way, intrinsic qualities serve as the seed and root for the clothing, and different styles of clothing are akin to leaves and flowers that sprout up from this seed. Just like roots produce plants and dress them in leaves and flowers of different forms and colors, these qualities also dress human beings in attires of various forms and colors. Some intrinsic qualities produce the desire of covering one's body, and as a result, keep him away from nudity, whereas some innate characteristics give rise to exhibitionism and compel him to expose his body.

This illustration explains one more subtle point: just as good or bad character of an offshoot depends on good or bad nature of its root, so is human attire that its acceptability or unacceptability depends on the good or bad nature of intrinsic qualities. It is highly unlikely that the root is beautiful and its

offshoot is ugly; the foundation of an attire is acceptable and the attire itself is unacceptable; the sources of a dress are pure and the dress itself is impure; There must be a correlation between the root and the offshoot. If inherent characteristics are righteous and noble, the attire will also be noble for sure, and if internal qualities are corrupted, the attire will also be corrupted and unacceptable.

Now, since the dresses and their acceptability or unacceptability rely on inherent character, it is this character that needs reformation first and foremost so that the subsidiaries are automatically reformed and take their appropriate form. This is why the Divine Law (Islamic Shariah) first paid attention to rectifying these intrinsic qualities and set a criterion for their righteousness and corruption. It ordained that those internal tendencies and urges which adhere to divine commandments and revealed directives are righteous and the dresses originating from them are good and acceptable, while those tendencies and urges which follow the carnal desires are evil and the dresses emerging from them are bad and unacceptable.

Given the fact that intrinsic qualities play the most crucial role in bringing about various forms of clothing, the same qualities are responsible for blowing the spirit of piety and impiety as well which absorbs the good or bad effects of those qualities and manifests them on the clothes. In fact, this is the immutable constant of Allah (*Sunnatullāh*) that he creates in every form and every figure a spirit suitable to it. Thus, if the intrinsic qualities are connected to heavenly world, they infuse the blessed and holy spirit by virtue of this connection, they absorb the goodness of the holy world, and then they bestow it on the cloth thereby making that cloth a

symbol of sanctity, purity, and godliness. On the contrary, if the inherent characteristics are connected to earthly impurities and carnal desires, they instill the evil spirit in the clothes by dint of this connection, they absorb the impurities and filth of this terrestrial world, and then they pour it on the cloth thereby making it a manifestation of animalistic tendencies, wickedness, and devilry.

To inform about these angelic and demonic spirits of clothes, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

> "Fold your clothes, their spirits return to them; because when Satan finds a folded cloth, he does not wear it, but if he finds it unfolded, he wears it."(61)

Wearing of unfolded clothes by Satan entails that the demonic spirit enters the cloth and the angelic spirit leaves it, which in turn proves the existence of good and evil spirits in the cloth. These spirits sock up the angelic or demonic effects from their respective reservoirs and channel these effects to the cloth.

In short, the good or bad character of the cloth depends on its spirit, and the holiness or evilness of this spirit depends on the righteous or wicked nature of intrinsic qualities. Thus, the acceptability or unacceptability of a dress actually depends on these intrinsic qualities or disposition. This is why all the prophets of Allah sought to establish a connection between internal characteristics of clothes and revelation, immaculate conscience, and devoted spirituality, instead of customs and

(61) Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr min Ḥadīth al-Bashīr al-Nadhīr*, no. 1120.

traditions, communal sentiments, and carnal desires, so that the clothing of a righteous man reflects the same righteous and angelic nature and protects him from those great physical or spiritual harms that may be caused – and are usually caused – by an ill-natured dress.

Before discussing those harms, it is appropriate to highlight that the inherent qualities that disqualify a dress from being acceptable in the eyes of Shariah and turn it into a source of so many ill-effects are of two types:

1- The intrinsic qualities that are related to sensuality: These qualities encourage extravagance, luxurious, and lavish clothing which in turn produces comfort-seeking, pleasure-loving, hedonism, laziness, and indolence to the extent that it takes away the energy and motivation to work.
2- The intrinsic qualities that are related to the desire for name and fame: These qualities encourage arrogant and boastful clothing which gives rise to self-importance, self-admiration, conceit, narcissism, egotism, vanity, and greed for name and fame to the extent that it takes away self-awareness and learning ability thereby exposing man to thousands of regrets and dejections.

When these two sentiments – the sensuality and desire for fame – cross their limits (the limits that have been set by Shariah), they replace moderation with extravagance and the clothing begins to reflect profligate qualities instead of restraint and moderation. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that the limit and bound for a dress, within which it can actually be termed as a dress, is moderation. And the disaster that ruins the real objectives of dress and deforms its essence

is extravagance. This extravagance first gives rise to idleness and recklessness, and then to arrogance and egotism.

The reason is that when man puts on an extravagant dress, it affects both his body and mind. The body absorbs the effects of comfort and the mind absorbs the effects of imagination. In other words, his body parts enjoy the touch, his eyes enjoy the look, and his mind enjoys the imagination of its beauty.

Therefore, man enjoys the dress in three ways: the joy of touch, the joy of sight, and the joy of perception. First two joys are related to external senses of body and dress, and the last one is related to internal sense of body and dress. Thus, there are mainly two types of joys and comforts rendered by the dress to human body; external and internal.

The first external joy – the joy of touch – refers to the comfort that human body feels upon touching the cloth. Obviously, this comfort lies in softness and smoothness of the cloth; that the cloth should not be harsh or rough lest it irritates the body. Otherwise, warm or breathable cloth is also comfortable, but this comfort is related to cold and hot weather and not to the sense of touch.

Then, this softness and smoothness is sometimes an essential property of the fabric, such as silk, as it is always soft and smooth no matter if it is thin (which is called *ḥarīr* in Arabic) or thick (which is known as *dībāj* in Arabic and *dībā* in Persian). Rather, when it is thick, it feels more soft, comfortable, and pleasant on the body. And sometimes this softness and smoothness is not an essential property but it is created in it, such as cotton garments, as the cotton thread if left on its true nature and then woven into a fabric, the cloth

will turn out rough and coarse which is named *khādī* (or *khaddar*) in Urdu. But if cotton thread is processed, refined, and converted into a thin, soft, and smooth fiber with a lot of work, then the woven cloth turns up soft and smooth instead of harsh and rough and becomes comfortable to wear, although it still does not match the softness of silk.

Besides these two, there is a third type of fabric which is neither essentially soft nor artificially, rather it is rough and harsh in every way. Woolen cloth, for example, no matter how much attempts are made to make it thin and filmy, and no matter how much long procedures it goes through to smoothen its fiber, it does not give up its rough nature. Even the softest woolen garment has a kind of irritating feel. It never provides the comfort and smoothness of a silk or cotton cloth. It is always somewhat discomforting.

In sum, upon considering these three types of clothes and the comforting or discomforting feel of their touch, the conclusion that we arrive is that the joy of touch depends on the material of garment.

The second external joy – the joy of sight – refers to the comfort and pleasant feel that a dress offers to human sight with the beauty of its colors, design, and style. For instance, the dress has bright colors, fancy embroidery, and shiny exterior. Or it is made to appear stylish and attractive with the use of fancywork involving silk, embroidery, needlecraft, tapestry, crocheting, patchwork, and lacework. Or the dress is cut and shaped in a unique fashion that draws attentions, engages interests, and captivates onlookers. In short, the joy of sight is concerned with the outward appearance of dress.

The internal joy, the joy of perception, means that a dress provides comfort and satisfaction to the wearer's mind thanks to its elegance and grace, no matter if this elegance is subjective, acquired by attribution, or integral to the composition of its fabric. That is to say, the cloth has neither bright colors nor peculiar design, yet it has some abstract features that make it exceptionally priceless, royal, and rare to find. Owing to this, the dress becomes appealing for imagination, fascinating for minds, and inducing for the sense of superiority and pride. It fills the heart with vanity and the wearer is deceived into viewing himself as the high and mighty.

This is the case with flannel and other thick fabrics that are produced in European textile factories that they do not have bright colors or shiny look, but they are priced very high on account of fine knitting. Same is with the garments produced in Paris for Indians, they are not made of a different material or have a different look from the Indian garments, but their attribution to Paris creates a special interest that convinces people to spend more.

Obviously, these garments do not have a shiny surface or radiant colors that could attract attentions nor do they boast a price tag or quality label that could inform the onlookers of its high-cost or extraordinary qualities, and yet these overpriced clothes are used for an imaginary satisfaction and the common perception that these are expensive, classy, luxurious, and are associated with high-class. So, the wearer's mind has a high opinion of himself based on the high value of the dress, which gives him a comforting feel. Apparently, this joy of perception does not comfort his body or eyes, but his mind. Thus, this joy is

neither concerned with the material of garment nor its appearance, rather it is connected to its abstract value.

Anyway, a dress can only provide three kinds of comforts to its wearer:

1. Through its material which is related to the softness and smoothness of the fabric.
2. Through its appearance which is related to its outward beauty.
3. Through its abstract value which is related to its high price.

Then, there are only three human faculties that mainly benefit from the above-mentioned comforts offered by the dress:

1. The faculty of touch which enjoys the touch of garments.
2. The faculty of sight which enjoys their appearance.
3. The faculty of sense perception which enjoys the imagination.

It needs no mention that the faculty of touch and sight are among the external faculties of human body which are instruments of action, while the faculty of sense perception is an internal human faculty that is an instrument of perception and knowledge. Hence, it can be said without any hesitation that through these faculties, the dress is connected to both human actions and human knowledge; it has a relationship with both his exterior and interior; his outward and his reality. And since his exterior and outward actions are the concern of worldly life and his reality is the concern of the afterlife, the dress is linked to both worldly life and the hereafter.

A dress affects the material life of a human being as well as his life after death. Therefore, the dress is not just a profane or societal thing whose effects discontinue once it is worn down and erodes. No! It might be temporary on the surface, but its reality accompanies the reality of human being forever, and its effects – whether positive or negative – will surely go beyond this earthly life to the life to come which will be eternal.

To elaborate, if human soul is given a free hand to immerse himself in the comforts of touch and sight before his full spiritual training and development, instead of habituating him to simple and modest lifestyle and rough and coarse clothing, then he will surely accustom himself to comfort-seeking, luxurious living, and ostentatious attitude. He will certainly avoid crude lifestyle, taking up challenges, and facing hardships. He will renounce manly toughness and ascetic abstinent. As a result, he will lose his most valuable trait, "bravery", which is the fountainhead of all the manly strengths and high moral values like patience, forbearance, and courage, and cowardice will take root in his heart which is the starting point of all the weaknesses and lowly morals.

The bravery, as a matter of fact, is demanded by Shariah, because on the one side, it motivates man to conquer the battlefield, to overcome the obstacles, and to play with swords and spears like children play with toys, and on the other, this bravery when manifested in clothing, enables the man to conquer his own-self with the weapons of abstinent and austerity and makes it easy for him to face the challenges within himself with the help of patience, forbearance, and endurance.

In other words, the bravery of action frightens the outside enemies (Satan, Jinn, and humans), while the bravery

of dress, i.e., its roughness and raggedness, terrifies the inside enemy (*nafs-e-ammārah*: the *nafs* that overwhelmingly commands a person to do sin) and spoils its ploys.

On the contrary, cowardice is detested by Shariah, because it humiliates the man in battlefield before outside enemies by compelling him to back off and flee from the fight, and it humiliates him in the fight with his self in front of the inside enemy, i.e., his own *nafs*, by submitting to carnal desires which eventually takes away his self-respect. Then, such extravagant and luxurious dress does not only eliminate bravery and destroy self-respect, but its wearer does not even achieve the expected comfort and pleasure for which he sacrificed his most valuable qualities. Instead, such dress causes much more corruption than this.

Comfort-seeking and luxurious lifestyle is generally impossible without a great deal of money. Therefore, a comfort-seeker will definitely have an urge to accumulate wealth, which inevitably opens the door for miserliness and penny-pinching and discourages kindness and selflessness. Then, this urge to hoard the wealth first paves the way for greed and kills the spirit of contentment, and then this greed keeps on growing till it makes him hungry for other people's wealth totally eliminating his generosity and benevolence, and turning him into a mean and tight-fisted creature.

Furthermore, the greed leads the greedy person to flattery and blandishment which destroys his self-esteem and traps him into the pit of dependency and slavery. Then, the combination of all these vices lay the foundation of lengthy hopes which wipe out one's motivation to maintain abstinence in this world as well as his interest in the afterlife. It needs no mention that it is this dependency on others,

lengthy hopes, and indulgence in worldly pleasures and bodily desires that deprive man of peace and tranquility of heart, and fill his mind with never-ending worries, concerns, anxiety, regrets, guilt, disturbance, stress, and uneasiness. Immaculate hearts realize these problems on an early stage, but the heedless ones do not realize until the adverse effects become visible to naked eyes.

So at the end, the man is unable to avail the very comfort and pleasure from the luxurious dress for which he chose it in the first place. He is unsuccessful in achieving the goal for which he littered his heart with filthy sentiments and bodily desires. Instead, he gained unrest and distress which is totally opposite of what he had aimed at. Additionally, he got distracted from the objectives of obedience and love which are impossible to accomplish without a serene heart and a calm mind. As Shirazi said:

نازپرورد تنعم نبرد راه به دوست　　　عاشقی شیوہ رندان بلاکش باشد

[The daintily nurtured in affluence took not the path to the Friend. The being a lover is the way of profligates.]

Now, you decide yourself how can Islam – being the upholder of self-respect and high moral standards – let Muslims put on such luxurious clothing that disturbs the spiritual system and gives rise to cowardice, miserliness, greed, avarice, flattery, dependency, slavery, and lengthy hopes; the vices that on the one side, throw man into the abyss of humiliation and disgrace thereby sabotaging his worldly life, and on the other, lead him to overwhelming stress and anxiety thereby preventing him from realizing the objectives of his religion which ultimately ruins his life after death.

This discussion demonstrates that the dress desired by Shariah is the one that gives rise to moral values that are exact opposite of the vices mentioned above, i.e., bravery, courage, manliness, determination, selflessness, contentment, generosity, self-respect, abstinence, and concern about the hereafter. These virtues restore dignity and confidence to make his worldly life a happy and prosperous one, in addition to granting him the peace and tranquility in his worships to better his afterlife.

For this reason, Islam has outright forbidden such clothing that is essentially soft and smooth, is extra comforting, and through which these vices take root in the wearer's personality. This is why the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) gave following instructions about wearing silk: "The silk is worn only by him who has no share (in the Hereafter)."(62) In another tradition, "The Prophet (PBUH) forbade the wearing of silk except for an area the width of two fingers, or three or four - and he gestured with his hand."(63)

One may assume that a garment made of thick silk might be permissible due to its thickness, but the thick silk is actually more comfortable and soothing. This is why in another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) explicitly forbade wearing of *dībāj* (thick silk), as narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: "Whoever wears silk or *dībāj* in this world, he shall not wear it in the Hereafter."(64)

As far as cotton cloth is concerned, since softness and smoothness are not its essential properties, the cotton cloth

(62) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 6081.
(63) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Hadith no. 365.
(64) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15:320, no. 41219.

has not been declared impermissible but rough cotton has been preferred over the soft one, as the former strengthens vigor while the letter produces laziness.

About soft cloth, the Prophet said: “One whose cloths are thin, his religion is weak.”[(65)] Moreover, It is related from Ziyād bin Kusaib Al-'Adawī: I was with Abū Bakrah under the pulpit of Ibn ‘Āmir while he was giving a sermon wearing a fine garment. Abū Bilāl said: “Look at our Amīr wearing clothes of wickedness!”[(66)]

To encourage wearing rough and coarse clothes, the Prophet (PBUH) said to Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī: “O Abū Dharr, wear thick and tight cloth so that arrogance and pride does not find way inside you.”[(67)]

In His letter addressed to the Arabs of Azerbaijan, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: “Wear the clothing of your father, Ismā‘īl. Beware of luxury living and dressing in the manner of the people of *‘ajam* (non-Arabs). Have a rough lifestyle, wear harsh clothes, train yourself for hardship.”[(68)]

However, the woolen cloth is inherently harsh and coarse which keeps the urge of comfort-seeking in check and instigates the courageous and valiant attitude. Therefore, wearing woolen garments will definitely help one to be motivated and attain the sweetness of faith. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Whoever wants to taste the sweetness of

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(65) Isma‘īl Ḥaqqī, *Tafsīr Ruḥ al-Bayān*, vol.3, p148, under Surah al-A‘rāf, verse 25-26.
(66) Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā at-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith 2224.
(67) ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 3:88, no. 5623
(68) Ibid, 15:472, no. 41870.

faith, he should wear the wool to humble himself before his Lord the Glorified and Mighty."[69]

This is the reason the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) most of the times wore woolen garments, and the pious and God-fearing men in general, and Sufis in particular, preferred woolen clothes. Some of them even went to the extent of wearing sackcloth for the sake of spiritual healing.

Anyway, silk is always soft, so it has been disallowed entirely. Its exact opposite is wool which is always harsh and coarse, so its use has been recommended and it became the regular dress of the Prophet. Coming to cotton, it is sometimes soft and sometimes harsh, so the soft cotton is disliked due to its resemblance to silk while the harsh cotton is desirable by virtue of its closeness to wool. And the purpose behind these regulations is to uproot the same vices that are produced by the joy of touch – that is, pleasure-seeking, luxurious living, extravagance, and profligacy – and to replace these with virtues like diligence, courage, bravery, abstinence, and contentment.

As far as the joy of sight is concerned, Islam does not like clothes with bright colors, bold designs, and glamorous styles that engage interests and captivate minds. Red color is the brightest and the most enticing, and that is why this is chosen over other colors on the occasions of wedding which is the occasion of happiness and celebration. The Prophetic instruction about wearing pure red color is: "Avoid red color, as it is the adornment most liked by Satan."[70]

In contrast, white color signifies simplicity and modesty. Therefore, the Prophet (PBUH) used very strong

(69) Ibid, 15:302, no. 41119.
(70) Ibid, 15:314, no. 41178.

words to express his liking for plain white clothes just as he had expressed his distaste for plain red. He said: "The cloth most liked by Allah is white."(71)

Similarly, the colors that are not too bright portray a kind of modesty and simplicity, like green and yellow, and therefore, these colors are also desirable; as stated in the hadith: "The Prophet's favorite color was green"(72), and "The color most liked by him was yellow."(73)

Similarly, the colors that are so dark and deep that they engulf all other shades, such as pure black, these colors are although the strongest of all, they tend to swallow the brightness and boldness of all other colors. Thus, such colors are also accepted and liked by the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) and were even worn by him.

In brief, colorless cloth is the most desirable as it signifies modesty and simplicity, and then there are various degrees of acceptability and unacceptability for clothes depending on the extent of their boldness and brightness. For this reason, even those clothes are disliked that are designed as showy and alluring, or the ones that are excessively decorated through fancywork. For instance, the Prophetic instruction regarding two such attractive and beautiful looking clothes – *qassi* (a garment which was brought from Egypt and Syria and

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(71) No hadith with this wording could be found. There are other traditions that demonstrate the preference of white clothes, such as: "The Prophet said: Wear your white garments, for they are among your best garments, and shroud your dead in them." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4061) And: "Wear white garments, for they are purer and better." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Book 32, Hadith 3696).

(72) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 7:118, no. 18263.

(73) Ibid, no. 18266.

had silken patterns embroidered like betel-leaf on its borders) and *maytharah* (a silken saddle cloth which women prepared for their husbands) – reads: "O Ali, I prefer for you what I prefer for myself, and I dislike for you what I dislike for myself. Do not wear *qassi* garment or the clothes dyed with Safflower, and do not ride on red *maytharah*, for they are the saddle clothes of Satan."(74)

In the same way, the cotton clothes that are hemmed with silk to make them appear lavish and fancy are undesirable, like modern coats, for instance, whose collars and sleeves are hemmed with matching colored velvet, or modern robes and cloaks whose edges are embroidered with silken and golden thread, or the jackets prepared with shiny silk thread specially for the wealthy, military, and royals; all of which offer the joy of touch along with the joy of sight. The Prophetic directive concerning the dresses hemmed with silk is: "Do not wear a shirt hemmed with silk."(75)

About the dress whose edges are hemmed with silk, it is related from Sa'īd bin Sufyān al-Qārī: I went to 'Uthmān bin 'Affān (may Allah be pleased with him) to inquire about a matter and I was wearing a robe whose collar and side openings were hemmed with silk. There was a man sitting with him who stared at me and began to pull my robe to tear it up and only left me upon 'Uthmān's intervention. On my way back, I asked about the man who was pulling my robe. I was informed that he was 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. So I went to his place and asked him the reason for pulling my robe. He replied: I have heard the Messenger of Allah say: "Soon my

(74) 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf,* 2:144, no. 2836.

(75) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15:316, no. 41194.

nation will make women's private parts and silk lawful (for themselves)", and this is the first time I am seeing silk garment on a Muslim. Upon knowing this, I immediately went out and sold the robe.[(76)]

Apparently, this robe was not fully made of silk, but only its edges had silk on them and it is quite possible that the silk was within the permissible limit. Yet 'Alī did not tolerate even this much to be worn by a true believer who fears God. And why is that? Because such adornment does not make positive impact on onlookers as well as the wearer himself. If the onlookers are poor and needy, they would wish to have such beautiful clothes but would be unable to afford due to their poverty, which will make them sad and frustrated; Their hearts will break and the reason will be the wearer of such a posh dress. This is, without a doubt, against some of Islam's most stressed upon attributes; empathy, compassion, selflessness, and kindness.

Moreover, these kinds of dresses engage the soul as well as the heart, and it goes without saying that the moments wherein human heart is engaged in admiring the beauty of colors and designs, in those moments it will definitely be distracted from the beauty of Divine Truth and its manifestations. It implies that this dress diverts the attention of its wearer from the goal to the means and from the objective to a non-objective, which is against rationality, wisdom, and insight; the attributes also very much emphasized by Islam.

The same wisdom is disclosed by the following hadith, narrated by 'Abd Allāh ibn Sarjis: The Messenger of

(76) Ibid, 15:468, no. 41860.

Allah (PBUH) said to me: "Give me your shawl." I said: O Allah's Messenger, your shawl is better than mine. To which he replied: "Yes, but my shawl has red stripes so I am afraid that I will look at it and it will distract me from my prayer."[77]

In this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) also hinted at different degrees of piety by declaring the same piece of cloth as harmful for himself and harmless for others. It shows that the more prominent a person is, the more conscious he should be even in dealing with legally permissible things. Furthermore, he also elucidated that different situations require different measures. One thing – red striped cloth for example – is harmless in some situations, as the Prophet himself was using it, but the same thing may be distracting in certain situations, such as during prayer and worship.

One thing is quite clear from this detailed discussion that dress is not something to be used in a casual and careless manner, rather it is something that should be used with utmost caution and care depending on situations, events, and one's position and status, for its positive and negative effects have an impact on the wearer as well as other people around him based on the wearer's position and status. Taking both types of impacts into account, Islamic Shariah has urged human being to be extra careful and vigilant in choosing his dress. This is why Islam preferred simplicity over elaborateness and even encouraged its adherents to wear old clothes and have a shabby look. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Listen, listen! Wearing old clothes is a part of faith, wearing old clothes is a part of faith."[78]

(77) Ibid, 15:314, no. 41177.
(78) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4061.

Ibn Mas'ūd said addressing to Muslims: "Be the wearers of old clothes."(79)

For the same reason, patching clothes and wearing the patched clothes has been a customary thing running down from the Prophet himself through his companions to the pious men of later generations, so that their weak successors who would be easily lured by smallest artificial beauty may follow their example and there will be an ideal for them in the predecessors; when the predecessors spared no efforts to protect their hearts with this much care, despite having strong hearts and determinations, the successors who have weak hearts certainly need to do much more to avoid heedlessness and unmindfulness.

The Holy Quran has summarized all these details in a comprehensive and inclusive verse in which it gave very important instructions to the Messenger of Allah:

> "And patiently stick with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure. Do not let your eyes look beyond them, desiring the luxuries of this worldly life. And do not obey those whose hearts We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follow only their desires and whose state is total loss." [Al-Kahf: 28]

So, this universal principle prohibits every such adornment that: exceeds the permissible limits of beautification and embellishment, portrays the showy and ostentatious behavior, preoccupies the heart and mind, and

(79) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 3:773, no. 8715.

makes one neglectful of the Divine Reality. Yes, Islam has permitted adornment. Rather it has admired it. But this adornment does not mean excessive decoration and obsession with improving one's appearance. Instead, it means to maintain cleanliness and purity, and to look neat and tidy. Therefore, the dress should not be expensive and lavish, but it must be clean and tidy.

This is why all the Prophetic traditions that encourage adornment actually refer to purity and cleanliness, and not to fancy designs and colors or extravagant fashions. The Almighty Himself likes the signs of his favors to be seen on his servants, but it should comply with the pattern of His obedient servants; the pattern which the earliest generations of this Ummah have displayed through their actions.

It is also worth noting that the Almighty Allah has created women as delicate gender with an inborn need for adornment. Women cannot be subjected to harsh and rough lifestyle, and consequently, they are not required to wear simple and dull attires. Rather, their delicate bodies demand soft and comfortable clothing. Therefore, silk clothes that are inherently soft have been declared permissible for them. Moreover, having an innate love for adornment entails the joy of sight, and thus, any attractive dress that is within the prescribed limits of Shariah is lawful for them.

Hence, the cleanliness for men and adornment for women are excluded from the Shariah rulings discussed above.

All in all, immoderate and excessive beautification leads to overindulgence in luxuries and gives rise to narcissism, which in turn nourishes cowardice, laziness, and timidity at the cost of courage and determination, thereby

ruining the practical as well as spiritual lives of man. In the same manner, immoderation in the joy of perception is also fatal for the life of human heart, as its life depends on the purity of thought and mind, whereas unrestricted liberty of thought, when it comes in contact with clothing, results in overspending and profligacy. In fact, immoderation is manifested in two forms: excess (*ifrāṭ*) and shortage (*tafrīt*). If dress contains more than necessary, it will be considered an excess and wastage. If it falls short of the requirement, it will be regarded as shortage and negligence. In both forms of immoderation, the dress will not represent moderate and decent disposition. Instead, it will be an indication of immoderate and extremist temperament which tend to ruin the afterlife of the wearer on the one hand, and impair and corrupt the collective life and social order on the other.

Wearing excessively long or excessively wide dress, which is termed by Shariah as "*isbāl*" (trailing or hanging down one's garment. For example, wearing such a long cloak that goes below the ankle or is much larger than the size of its wearer. The royal dresses worn by monarchs are usually so big and lengthy that their lower part trails behind or it is carried by their servants. Or, for instance, wearing a shirt with its sleeves exceeding the finger tips; wearing a trouser exceeding the ankle; wearing a turban with an absurdly long hanging; or any garment whatsoever that is unnecessarily and overly large in size. Such garments if worn without any particular intention and specific reason, then it) comes from negligence and carelessness, which indicates that the heart is far from the remembrance of Allah. This negligence results in the hardness of heart and takes away its softness which on the one side, stops one from devoting himself to Allah, and on the other, it deprives him of the ability and opportunity to

turn to Him, not to mention the deadly consequences of this deprivation.

And if such extravagant dress is donned with a particular intention, for example, to glamorize and admire oneself, then this dress springs from narcissistic sentiments which tend to do away with the understanding and awareness of one's true self thereby leading him to disregarding moral enhancement and self-realization. Furthermore, it is this narcissistic dress that naturally gives rise to pretentious and showy behavior in an attempt to portray oneself as beautiful and attractive to others, and it is this behavior that culminates in what is known in Shariah as *riyā*ʾ (pretending virtuousness) which is a destroyer for sincerity and integrity; the two basic foundations for Islamic faith.

Then, the person wearing such pretentious dress has to adopt affectation and artificiality to chase new fashion trends in order to appear more attractive, and it is this artificiality that makes one concerned with superficial beauty instead of inner and real beauty. Besides, it takes away the simplicity and naturalness which is the first step towards ultimate peace and satisfaction.

Then, this ever-increasing affectation and too much artificial beauty inevitably produce arrogance, pride, haughtiness, and egotism, which in turn wipe out the humble emotions like humility, modesty, servitude to God, and subjugation to His commands. This is how the sense of superiority and self-adulation take root in one's heart; he loses the sense of his servitude to Allah; and the lowly human even dares to stand before the Almighty and the Exalted God as His rival.

Then, the wearer of such an arrogant and boastful attire unavoidably develops the tendency to look down on the poor and needy who are not dressed in fancy clothes. It needs no mention that this tendency is the cause of widespread corruption, injustice, hatred, conflicts, hostility, fanaticism, bigotry, violence, and bloodshed all around the world. It is devastating for communal harmony, peace, and civil order. Thus, boastful dressing is dangerous for the society at large and is a huge moral hazard on account of which the society destroys its culture and civilization with its own hands.

A dress may also be categorized as immoderate if it crosses the limits of moderation in a certain characteristic. For instance, the cloth is too thin or too thick; it is extra soft or extra harsh; it is overly pretty or overly ugly; it is very dull or very bright; it is extremely expensive or dirt cheap. In short, excess of anything that makes the dress extraordinary and center of attraction or discussions; people gossip about it; they point fingers towards it; it becomes the hot topic; it manages to lure some individuals while others detest it; some continuously praise it and some endlessly criticize it. Hence, the dress becomes an instrument for everyone’s amusement and entertainment.

The first type of unusual dress – i.e., extraordinarily beautiful dress – is generally used by those followers of desires whose aim is to flaunt their beauty, wealth, or status. And the second type – i.e., extraordinarily ugly and bad looking dress – is generally used by those self-righteous and pharisaic people who want to display their hypocritical religiosity and false piety.

However, both are examples of immoderate clothing which alone is sufficient to distance one from truth and to

deprive him of the goodness of both worlds. The reason is that the boastful dress of the first group fosters their lust for name and fame which in turn diminishes their religiosity and the ability to think and believe, thereby gradually making them more and more heedless and hard-hearted. Conversely, the deceiving dress of the second group nurtures their misconceptions, ultimately making them confident of their so called righteousness and piety thanks to their foolish devotees. Therefore, this deceiving dress proves to be an affliction for the wearer as well as his devotees, as the wearer is deprived of the opportunity, or even the possibility, to reform himself and his beliefs, while his admirers are deprived of the ability to identify the real reformers who could guide them to the right path. The leader fails to differentiate between right and wrong, and the followers fail to distinguish the true reformer from the self-proclaimed one. Thus, the immoderate clothing robs many of the power of thinking and reasoning.

The above discussion has made it clear that when a dress crosses the limits of moderation to become extravagant, it culminates in numerous self-centric attributes, like heedlessness, hard-heartedness, narcissism, show-off, affectation, insincerity, arrogance, pride, sense of supremacy, looking down on others, and causing harm, along with countless other vices showing their effects on the wearer as well as the people around him. Moreover, it has also become evident that if a person wants his dress to have good effects on himself and other people, he must choose a dress that manifests pure and humane moral values in total contrast of the above-mentioned immoralities, such as heedfulness, obedience, soft-heartedness, leniency, selflessness, sincerity, integrity, simplicity, humility, servitude, compassion, and respectfulness.

This is the reason why Islam – the only true religion that has stressed upon high moral standards in every walk of life and which regards good manners as the most precious asset of a Muslim – has forbade every such dress that falls within the bounds of immoderate and excessive clothing – be it in terms of its price and value, its shape and design, or its qualitative or quantitative attributes – or that which springs from excessive and self-centric desires and which gives rise to arrogance and vanity instead of the pure and humane virtues.

First of all, the Prophet (PBUH) made it clear that '*isbāl'* may apply to any piece of clothing. That is to say, any cloth can be called 'excessively long' if it exceeds its usual length. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Hanging down (*isbāl*) is in lower garment, shirt, and turban."[(80)]

Then in a hadith of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Prophet (PBUH) mentioned the punishment for those who wear excessively long dress out of arrogance and pride, saying: "He who trailed his garment out of pride, Allah would not look towards him on the Day of Resurrection."[(81)]

Further, the Prophet (PBUH) expressed his anger at some forms of '*isbāl'*. About the garment worn below the waist, such as trouser and loincloth that hangs down below the ankle, he said: "The way for a believer to wear a lower garment is to have it halfway down his legs and he is guilty of no sin if it comes halfway between that and the ankles, but what comes lower than the ankles is in Hell. On the day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at him who trails his lower garment conceitedly."[(82)]

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(80) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4094.
(81) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, hadith no. 2085.
(82) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4093.

A long shirt with its bottom part exceeding the ankles has the same rule as a long trouser. ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib is reported to have severed his sleeves that exceeded his hands and said: "Ankles have no priority over hands."

Moreover, there are several incidents related to the Rashidun caliphs recorded in the books of hadith that they ordered to cut long sleeves that exceeded the hand and expressed their dislike over the same. Since the first negative impact of excessively long dress is self-admiration, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq criticized this in the following tradition:

> Ayesha narrated: Once I wore a new garment. I looked at it and I got fascinated by it. Abū Bakr asked: "What are you looking at? Allah is not looking at you." I asked the reason, to which he said: "Did you not know that when a slave gets fond of the adornment of the world, his Lord Almighty be displeased with him until he gets rid of that adornment." Ayesha says: I became terrified and I donated that garment. After which Abū Bakr said: "Perhaps that will atone for you."(83)

The message of this hadith is to avoid a dress that leads one to have a high opinion of himself. It implies that one should regard himself as lowly, sinner, and uninformed; which is commonly termed as self-awareness or awareness of one's true self. Therefore, the desirable dress in the eyes of Islam is the one that represents self-awareness instead of self-admiration.

(83) ʻAlī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15: 459, no. 41830.

About boastful clothing, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever wears clothes to show off so that other people will look at him; Allah will not look at him until he takes it off."[(84)]

Thus, the dress should neither be worn to get fascinated by it – as appears from the previous tradition – nor to show off to others – as proved by this tradition – hence proving that the only purpose of clothing is to cover and protect the body. If some sort of adornment is adopted, it must also be for the sake of Allah alone which is the highest form of sincerity. Therefore, an acceptable dress is the one that stems from sincerity as opposed to ostentation.

A showy dress produces artificiality and affectation. The following tradition of 'Umar guides Muslims on how their dresses should be free from any such artificiality and affectation:

> Ibn 'Umar narrates that one day 'Umar wore a new shirt and found its sleeves exceeding his fingertips. So he asked Ibn 'Umar to bring a scissor and severe the excessive part. Once he did that, the sleeves became unequal in size. Ibn 'Umar requested to let him cut them in equal length, to which 'Umar said: "Leave it my son! I have seen the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) doing the same."[(85)]

The prompt reaction of 'Umar to extra-long sleeves and then his indifference about the appearance and beauty of

(84) Ibid, 15: 318, no. 41203.
(85) Ibid, 15: 479, no. 41892.

his garment shows that Islam wants its followers to be dressed in simple and spontaneous clothing and it does not like to see them busy in cutting, shaping, adorning, and beautifying their garments, whether on their own or through their near and dear ones. In fact, Islam – being the natural religion – prefers its adherents to maintain an unconcerned attitude about their outward appearance (unless there is a need). This point has been highlighted in one of the Prophetic saying:

> "Indeed Allah loves a believer with casual clothing who does not care what he is wearing."[86]

This hadith uproots the very foundation of artificiality and superficial beauty. The message of this hadith is that the dress is meant to serve the wearer, so do not make yourself its servants; do not pay too much attention to its adornment and beautification. One should neither be excessively worried about his appearance nor should he be too careless or excessively simple, as it is another spectrum of immoderation. The best path lies is in between. And since ostentatious clothing opens the door for undue pride in oneself, the Prophet warned about such clothing:

> "Allah does not look at him who trails his lower garment out of pride."[87]

The reason is that when one dons a dress out of pride, his attention shifts from remembrance of Allah to his own outward beauty. Therefore, the Almighty Allah too shifts his attention from him. Thus, instead of self-admiration, the dress should nurture the sentiments of self-awareness. And

(86) Ibid, 3:87, no. 5620.
(87) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, hadith no. 2085.

since such dress instigates the boastful and arrogant emotions, the Prophet warned against the arrogance-producing clothing as well. He said: "On the day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at him who trails his lower garment arrogantly."[88]

Evidently, the prohibition of arrogant clothing suggests that only humble should be used. Moreover, a boastful dress naturally encourages man to spend more on his clothes. That is why the Prophet (PBUH) advised us to choose a simple and low cost dress in the hadith cited before: "Indeed Allah loves a believer with casual clothing who does not care what he is wearing." This hadith recommends casual, simple, as well as inexpensive and low-cost clothing.

Overall, our discussion above was about immoderate clothing in terms of quantity. Apart from this, Islamic Shariah has also dealt with the question of immoderation in terms of quality or attributes. No matter if this immoderation or excess is found in thickness of cloth or its thinness, in its softness or harshness, in its beauty or ugliness, in its modesty or sloppiness, and in its coziness or painfulness; the excess in whatever way is prohibited. The reason is that both types of excess – qualitative and quantitative – stem from the same motive; to gain name and fame, be it in worldly affairs or in religion. This love for name and fame is the biggest obstacle to improving one's ethical and moral condition and uplifting his spiritual status to reach the pinnacle of perfection. It entices man to follow his carnal desires and then deprives him of spiritual ecstasy. Therefore, any quality of cloth that tends to push man into any such predicament is detested by Shariah. It is narrated that:

(88) Ibid.

> "The Prophet (PBUH) forbade wearing the two clothes of fame; Thick and thin clothes, soft and rough clothes, and long and short clothes. The appropriate clothes are those which fall in between."(89)

In another tradition:

> "The Prophet (PBUH) forbade wearing two clothes; The one which is famous for its beauty and the one which is famous for its ugliness."(90)

The prohibition of fame and popularity in clothing entails that the cloth must be indistinctive and unnoticeable, so that it should not stand out from others or attract attention; The wearer must appear like a random person with no distinction or distinguishing mark. However, if someone puts on an extraordinary dress for a valid reason, like as a mode treatment, for protection, or overwhelmed by a spiritual state, then it will be an individual case and an exception from the general rulings of Shairah which will not affect their universal application.

For instance, some holy men have used fine clothes overwhelmed by the spiritual state (*ḥāl*) of gratefulness and appreciation for the bounties of God, while some others – overwhelmed by the state of abstinence, content, and patience – have used not only coarse garments but even sackcloth. But since these are special cases which are based on special circumstances and individual situations, they do not affect the common legal injunctions of Shariah, and

(89) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15: 312 no. 41172.
(90) Ibid, no. 41171.

neither are they affected by these injunctions. Even the Prophet (PBUH) himself donned fine clothes on some occasions – in spite of his utmost contentment, abstinence, and self-restraint – not as a habit, but for certain reasons depending on the situation and people he was dealing with, such as to declare the permissibility, to please someone who gifted something him, to cheer up his companions, or to answer their questions. When some of his companions asked if wearing fine clothes or fine shoes constitute arrogance, he replied:

> "Verily, Allah is Graceful and He loves Grace. Pride is disdaining the truth (out of self-conceit) and contempt for the people."(91)

At another occasion, he observed: "Indeed Allah loves to see the results of his favors upon His Slaves."(92)

So, these special cases pertain to individual circumstances and particular questions, but the actual law and common rule is the principle derived from the above-mentioned traditions. Therefore, in ordinary situations, this common law will be applicable. But in some special circumstances and for temporary reasons, extraordinarily good or bad clothing will also be deemed acceptable. It is also worth noting that the authority to decide where fine clothing is harmful for one's moral disposition and is against the objectives of Islam and where it is not is only vested with those who possess sound intellect and immaculate conscience. Undeniably, only those can be given this

(91) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, hadith no. 164.
(92) At-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith no. 2819.

authority who have developed a refined taste and proper understanding of religion by submitting themselves to complete adherence of Shariah, acting totally in accordance to Islamic teachings, and purifying their disposition and character; irrespective of whether they are true scholars of Islam, pious devotees of Allah, or holy saints. Ignorant fools are not suitable for this task. They first need to pay attention to reforming their taste and complying to the teachings of Islam, instead of making innovative claims. As long as they do not change their pattern, neither their judgements nor their actions will hold any authoritative status.

Anyway, it has become quite evident that an immoderate dress – be it in terms of quality or quantity – is the source of all moral corruptions, and such dress cannot acquire any goodness unless it becomes the birthplace of Godly remembrance instead of heedlessness, leniency instead of hard-heartedness, self-awareness instead of self-admiration, sincerity instead of show off, simplicity instead of artificiality, gratefulness instead of arrogance, humility instead of vanity, respectfulness instead of contempt, compassion instead of mischief, and liking for anonymity instead of fame.

Now, just as excess (*ifrāṭ*) in the length, width, size, and attributes of cloth produces many filthy and immoral qualities, any shortfall or reduction (*tafrīt*) in these aspects also yields a number of moral corruptions. If a dress falls short of fulfilling the requirement and fails to cover the body, some body parts that must have been covered would then be exposed, which will certainly produce the negative effects that were supposed to be prevented by covering those body parts.

This form of immoderation, i.e., *tafrīt* or scarcity is manifested in the following four forms:

First form: is that the scarcity of clothes reaches its highest point where there is no room for any more scarcity. That is to say, one abandons clothing altogether and embraces total nudity. Sometimes there is a religious factor behind, as is the case with Naga Sadhus among Hindus who have this false conception that by going naked, they are renouncing the worldly life. And sometimes people give up clothes as a stupid cultural practice, as is the case with many foolish Europeans who lead a nudist lifestyle and see this animal-like way of living as far superior and beneficial than normal human lifestyle.

Second form: The clothing is not abandoned altogether but the clothes are shortened so much so that they fail to cover the body parts that were ought to be covered, such as shorts that do not cover knee and thighs for men, and modern western outfits for women that do not cover chest and arms.

Third form: The dress is neither totally missing nor it is too short; It covers all the necessary body parts. However, it is too tight and close-fitting that it barely hides the shape, size, and curves of the body. For example, trousers that cover the entire private area but are so tight that the shape and size of the private parts is exposed, or close-fitting jackets and robes for women that reveal the curves of their body, or stockings worn by modern women that are so tight-fitting that their legs remain visible.

Fourth form: The clothes are neither absent nor too short or too tight; They are adequate in all three respects. Yet they lack the concealing property which makes their presence as good as their absence. For instance, the cloth is

very thin or translucent that fails to hide color, shape, and even the contour of body parts, such as dhoti of Hindu males and saree of Hindu females that are made of very thin fabric, or night dress of Western women which consists of a very thin and long robe and they do not use it specifically for their husbands but they wear it at night even in the presence of other men.

These are total four forms of shortfall and negligence in clothing, out of which three – i.e., nudity, short dress, and tight-fitting dress – pertain to shortfall in quantity, while the fourth form – i.e., thin and translucent dress – relates to shortfall in quality. If this shortfall and negligence is intended for affectation and ostentation, then the root of this clothing would be self-admiration and show-off, the adverse effects whereof have been highlighted earlier that give rise to countless self-centric immoral qualities that have already been discussed in detail.

If the intention behind wearing revealing clothes is to lure others, then the fountainhead of such dress is lust and lechery which is lethal for modesty, chastity, sense of honor, and other noble attributes and is a producer of indecency, obscenity, vulgarity, debauchery, and other such immoral filths. And if the intention behind this unnatural practice is to gain some bodily benefits, then it needs no mention that the ethical and spiritual harms it causes by far outweigh those meagre benefits. It is like preferring mediums over the goals, or running after temporary enjoyment at the cost of permanent satisfaction.

If body is exposed due to lack of knowledge, it would be called ignorance and stupidity. And if it is done despite having the knowledge, it would be termed as insanity and wickedness.

If nudity is adopted as a religious practice under a delusion of its spiritual benefits, as claimed by Hindu Yogis, then it is also a fact the custodian of all spiritual benefits are divine religions, and no divine religion has ever recognized nudity as the method to please God. If the claim of spiritual benefits is inspired by a false religion, it would be nothing but blind adherence to his forefathers which springs from gullibility and self-deception. And if this claim has no basis at all in any religion whatsoever, then its sources are religious heresy, manufactured beliefs, man-made doctrines, and carnal desires.

Anyway, when all four forms of negligence and scarcity in clothing stem from self-centric, lustful, and lecherous motives, evil sentiments, delusion, ignorance, stupidity, wickedness, transgression, irreligion, heresy, and false beliefs, how can Islamic Shariah tolerate such negligence and how could it condone such clothing knowing that it encourages human being to indulge in this immoral filth and ruin their worldly life as well as the hereafter. Therefore, Islam forbade all four forms of obscenity and indecency.

To prevent the first form of indecency – i.e., total nakedness and bareness – Islam, first of all, prohibited performing religious worships while being nude. In the pre-Islamic period, Arabs used to perform Hajj around the Holy Kaaba stark naked, so the Prophet (PBUH) decreed: "And no naked person is allowed to perform the Ṭawāf around the Ka`ba."[93]

Then, the Holy Quran declared it impermissible to expose one's intimate parts during prayers (*ṣalāt/namāz*) and made it mandatory to cover them:

(93) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 369.

> "O Children of Adam! Take your adornment [i.e., wear your clothing] at every masjid." [Al-A'rāf: 31]

In this verse, 'adornment' refers to clothing which is the medium of adornment, as the adornment itself is an abstract thing which cannot be taken in hands. And masjid here refers to prayer itself. The message of the verse is: wear your clothes at every time of prayer and do not worship in naked state.

In the next step, Islam banned nudity at those special occasions wherein nudity was expected. For instance, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) forbade entering hammam unclothed. And then in the next step, Islam absolutely prohibited undressing and exposing one's body.

> Miswar bin Makhrama reported: I was carrying a heavy stone and my lower garment was loose, and it, therefore, slipped off (so soon) that I could not place the stone (on the ground) and carry to its proper place. Upon this the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Return to your cloth (lower garment), take it (and tie it around your waist) and do not walk naked.[94]

Furthermore, exposed bodies may tempt one to look with lustful intent which may later turn into a habit. This habit has harmful effects on both physical and spiritual health. Therefore, the Prophet (PBUH) forbade looking at other people's private parts to prevent from this sin. Moreover, the Shariah did not stop at prohibiting men from

(94) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, hadith no. 341

looking at women and vice versa, rather it went one step further and barred men from looking at men's private parts and women from looking at women's private parts. The Messenger of Allah said: "A man should not see the private parts of another man, and a woman should not see the private parts of another woman."(95)

In addition, the Prophet (PBUH) warned that lustful glance calls for Allah's curse. He said: "God curse the one who looks and the one who is looked at."(96)

About the second form of indecency – i.e., wearing short clothes – the Prophetic traditions have prescribed limitations; that men may uncover below the knee and above the navel, and women may uncover below the ankle and above the neck. What is in between must remain covered. These are the limitations of *'awrah* (The intimate parts of the human body which must be covered by clothing). Crossing these limits will constitute immoderation and will, therefore, be unlawful.

As for the third form – i.e., wearing tight-fitting clothes – which does not reveal the intimate body parts but discloses their shape and size, 'Umar al-Fārūq issued the following decree: "'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb barred women from wearing qabāṭī (a tight-fitting dress) and said: Although it does not expose the body, it discloses the figure."(97)

'Umar specifically mentioned women because their whole body is included in *'awrah* and the Shariah has given

(95) Ibid, 338.
(96) Aḥmad bin Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, vol.10, p214, Hadith no. 7399.
(97) Abu al-Walīd al-Bājī, *Al-Muntaqā sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭā* (Egypt: Maṭba' al-Sa'ādah, 1332 AH), vol 7, p224.

special attention to women's ḥijāb, otherwise the above prohibition by 'Umar is based on the Islamic injunction to cover one's intimate parts and, as such, the same prohibition is also applicable to men with respect to their intimate body parts.

As far as the fourth form of indecency is concerned – i.e., wearing very thin and gauzy dress – the Prophet gave a stern warning: "Women who are naked even though they are wearing clothes, go astray and make others go astray, and they will not enter the Garden and they will not find its scent, and its scent is experienced from as far as the distance travelled in five hundred years."(98)

Moreover, once the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) gave a very thin garment to Usāma and later asked him about it. Usāma replied that he has given it to his wife. Upon hearing this, the Messenger (PBUH) said: "Order your wife to attach a lining below it. I am afraid that it will show the shape of her bones."(99)

Furthermore, a lining is not only required when the garment is very flimsy and the exposure of figure is certain, but it is also required when the garment is relatively thin and the exposure is possible. The proof is that Usāma did not think of telling his wife to attach a lining while giving her the garment, which demonstrates that the garment was not very flimsy wherein the exposure was inevitable. Otherwise, how could a pious man like him tolerate the exposure of *'awrah*. In addition, the Prophet's statement "I am afraid that it will show the shape

(98) Mālik bin Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭā* (Abu Dhabi: Mu'assasah Zāyad bin Sulṭān, 2004), hadith no. 3384.
(99) Aḥmad bin Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, edited by: 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), no. 3262.

of her bones" support the same inference that the exposure was probable and not certain. Or else, he would not have used the expression 'I am afraid'.

Now, when the Prophet advised to attach lining even though the exposure of body shape was probable, you can imagine how crucial it will be to use a lining if the cloth is gauzy and the exposure is inevitable, and how inappropriate will be the usage of such garment by both men and women. As for the reason for making specific reference to women, it is the same as the one discussed above.

All in all, excess and shortfall in clothing pertain to all three comforts rendered by clothes: the comforts of touch, sight, and perception, and their root cause is either pleasure-seeking and luxurious living, or arrogance and conceit. Then, both types of vices come under the banner of extravagance which signifies excessiveness and immoderation.

Therefore, it is immoderation that is to be blamed for the immoralities arising from a dress, and the credit for all the good effects of clothing goes to moderation. Thus, the first step towards purifying the dress is to purge it of extravagant elements. The following commandment of Allah's Apostle (PBUH) highlights the same reality in utmost comprehensive and yet impossibly simple words:

> "Wear clothes, as long as that does not involve any extravagance or vanity.[100]

This extravagance encompasses a whole lot of problems originating from luxurious lifestyle and arrogant attitude that we have already discussed in detail. However, since arrogance and vanity is much more dangerous than

(100) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 3605.

luxuriousness, the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) stated it specifically to caution his followers. Otherwise, this hadith is mainly about extravagance which is the fountainhead of both types of moral corruption.

Further, this extravagance covers all types of immoderations, be it in the exterior of dress or its interior, such as the immoderation in its material or appearance, in its softness or coarseness, in its tapestry or colors, in its pattern or design, or in its price or value. No matter what is the kind of immoderation, it will definitely fall under the banner of extravagance.

Moreover, when extravagance materializes in the form of luxuriousness and instigates sensual desires, it destroys personal life as these animalistic sentiments are the root cause for idleness, cowardice, and timidity. And when extravagance transpires in the form of arrogance and vanity, it stimulates self-centric sentiments which in turn destroy the social life, for these evil urges are the root cause of the widespread corruption.

In other words, the first category of extravagant dress interferes with personal interests and spiritual order, while the second category disrupts collective interests and civil order. Therefore, extravagance is harmful for both personal as well as collective lives.

At this point, it becomes quite clear that the personal and collective well-being – in the domain of clothing – relies on a dress that: Complies with Islam's ethical codes characterized by moderation, in terms of its essence, substance, and appearance; Whose joy of touch, sight and perception do not leave a bad impact on the wearer's body or mind; Which produces bravery and forbearance instead of

cowardice and comfort-seeking; Which fosters humility and decency instead of arrogance and vanity; so that on the one hand, this dress eliminates laziness and generates energy and motivation thereby making the personal life a fruitful one, and on the other, it eradicates self-admiration and nurtures devotion, selflessness, and humbleness before God as well as His creations thereby making the collective life a prosperous one. Additionally, since personal and collective well-being are linked to the well-being of the hereafter, it will be appropriate to say that the effects of a dress are not confined to this world alone, but they also reach the life after death. Hence, clothing is not something trivial or inconsequential.

To sum up, this entire discussion is a commentary on the extremely comprehensive saying of the Prophet with which we had started the discussion, and whereof one single word ‘extravagance’ encompasses all the evil effects of clothing and the various degrees of those effects.

Lastly, I am unable to express my gratitude for my Lord the Sustainer and Provider who opened my heart and endowed this humble servant with detailed and structured elaboration of the hadith, and then enabled me to put it forward and facilitated to translate the same from my heart to these pieces of paper. So endless praises be for Allah Who guided me to this path, and we would have never find this way if Allah had not guided us.

The above elaboration has made it clear that clothes also possess some intrinsic characteristics (*akhlāq*) that show their effects on the wearer. It has also come to light that clothes are influenced by these characteristics; Every style and fashion is brought into effect by these characteristics, and it is the same characteristics that blow different kinds of

spirits in the dress and make the dress a manifestation of their good and bad effects.

At this point, one more thing comes to my mind: just as every living being is capable of exerting its effects on other things within its scope and depending on the nature of its life, so is this dress which is alive and has its own spirit, or which consists of a material and a form. Just like all other living things, the dress does not only get influenced and absorb the effects of innate characteristics, but also it begins to produce its own effects upon reaching the peak of absorption. In other words, the effects that the dress has acquired from innate characteristics, it begins to return the same to those characteristics, which strengthens the characteristics and firmly establishes them in the heart.

This is like the example of mirror which absorbs the light of the sun to the peak of its capacity and becomes, in a way, a carbon-copy of the sun, and then it begins to illuminate every place that it is aimed at with the same kind of light that it had absorbed from the sun. It could be said that this illumination by the mirror is actually a reflection of the sunlight which the mirror has redirected and spread over a wider area.

Or it is like roots of a tree that first produce leaves and branches and then the roots obtain nourishment from the blooming leaves and branches to stabilize themselves more firmly in the soil. So, this stability actually originated from the roots which is now coming back to them through leaves and branches.

Or it is like the power of knowledge which first exerts its force on body parts in the form of actions, and then repeated and recurring actions begin to enhance and deepen the knowledge. So, this enhancement is actually an effect of

the knowledge itself which is influencing itself through actions.

Or it is like the vital spirit of living beings that first nurtures their bodies and provides them with a new existence every passing moment, and then it becomes stronger influenced by the growth of bodies. So, it is as if vital spirit's function of nurturing bodies was for its own benefit which come back to it through those bodies.

Or it is like the dress itself which absorbs the effects of our bodies, such as odor, sweat, and other bodily wastes that consist of the used up part of our food. Ultimately, the cloth begins to smell the same as our bodies, it becomes dirty just like the bodies, and it changes its color similar to bodies. And then the dress starts to give these dirty effects back to the body thereby causing the body to be more stinky and dirty. This transfer of filth from clothes to body creates the risk of spreading various diseases and infections.

Just as physical part of clothes takes in the effects of our bodies and then return the same effects to our bodies, which in turn strengthens them, in the same way, the abstract part of cloth or its spirit first absorbs the effects of our innate disposition to the extent that the moral qualities – like simplicity, contentment, and abstinence etc. – or immoral characteristics – like artificiality, show off, and lustfulness – enter the cloth and the cloth begins to return the same qualities to the same bodies from which it had borrowed them. As a result, these qualities take root inside our hearts and become either more righteous and virtuous or more wicked and vicious.

Islam has highlighted these effects of dress that influence the character of human being in various ways. For

illustration, the Apostle of Allah (PBUH) informed us that wearing *'amamah* (turban) increases forbearance and dignity. He said: "Turbans are the crowns of the Arabs."[101] He is also reported to have said: "Wear the Turban as it will increase your forbearance."[102]

Similarly, the Prophet (PBUH) informed us that wearing woolen clothes makes one stronger in his faith: "Whoever wants to taste the sweetness of faith, he should wear the wool to humble himself before his Lord the Glorified and Mighty.[103]

In the same manner, Islamic traditions tell us that wearing garment above the ankle keeps the garment clean and pure, and increases the wearer in piety. It is reported that a young man came to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb whose clothes were touching the ground. So 'Umar ordered him: "Lift your clothes, for this will keep your clothes clean and save you from the Punishment of your Lord."[104]

Likewise, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) informed us that thick and harsh clothes eliminate arrogance and pride, and increase humility. He said to Abū Dharr al-Ghifāri: "O Abū Dharr, wear thick and tight cloth so that arrogance and pride does not find way inside you."[105]

In brief, effect and influence in clothes work in both ways; Firstly, human character and disposition influences the dress that he is wearing, and secondly, the dress influences his disposition. The only difference is that the influence of

(101) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15: 305 no. 41132.
(102) Ibid, no. 41135.
(103) Ibid, 15:302, no. 41119.
(104) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 3700.
(105) Ibid, 3:88, no. 5623.

disposition invents the effects in dress which are manifested on human body, while the influence of dress returns the same effects to human disposition which firmly establishes those characteristics in the human heart. Therefore, the actual originator of effects is human disposition whose outward effects influence the appearance of human being and inner effects influence his heart.

At this point, one more thing comes to my mind: that out of these two types of effects, the one invented by innate disposition is involuntary and the one returned by dress is voluntary. It is because our dispositions and their effects are not something we have brought into existence; neither are we capable to get rid of them. So, naturally, the inherent effects of these dispositions are not in our control either. However, the dress itself, its fabric and design, its cut and shape, and its usage are something in our control. Thus, we are also in control of their effects and outcomes, since we can choose which dress to wear at which occasion and let it exert its effects.

This is same as the fact that characteristics of generosity and free-handedness are natural, but the act of giving and donating to strengthen these qualities is a voluntary act. Or it is like shyness and modesty are inborn attributes which are not in our hands, but covering the body and preserving the chastity, and in turn strengthening the attribute of modesty, are in our control.

In the same way, the innate characteristics affecting the dress are out of our control, but wearing the dress, choosing its design and style, and keeping it simple and moderate are our voluntary actions. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the effects of dress that are invented by human

disposition – whether good or bad – are natural, whereas the effects that are returned by dress to the disposition – whether good or bad – are in human control.

Dresses and Fashion

The above discussion indicates that the effects of dress – whether positive or negative – can be classified in two types: Inborn effects and acquired effects.

The first type invents the good or bad effects in the dress, while the second type strengthens those effects. Perhaps it is these two types of effects that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) subtly pointed at in the following supplication that he used to recite whenever he wore a new garment:

> "O Allah, praise is to You. You have clothed me. I ask You for its goodness and the goodness of what it has been made for, and I seek Your protection from the evil of it and the evil of what it has been made for."[106]

The Prophetic words 'I ask You for its goodness' proves that the dress has its own good effects placed in it by Allah which are innate to it. And the expression 'the goodness of what it has been made for' proves that there is another type of goodness that is created in it by men and which is acquired by deliberate efforts.

Then, the same kinds of expressions have been used pertaining to evil effects of dress which proves the existence of two different types of evil effects (Inborn and acquired) inside the dress.

Once it is established that the effects of human disposition on dress are involuntary and the effects of dress

(106) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4020.

are voluntary, it explains one more complicated issue that we are only required to choose a dress with good effects that is within our reach. That is to say, we are not asked to directly change our innate disposition in order to reform our dressing, or in other words, to achieve the objective first and then come to the means, as no beginner or novice is capable to do that. If they were capable, then gradual process of learning, vigorous efforts of mentors, and continuous struggle of learners all would have been of no use and every newbie would straightaway transform his wicked nature into a noble one and would directly jump to the endpoint; All of which are against the immutable constants of Allah.

Therefore, the first thing demanded from us is to make our clothing acceptable and modest in terms of its appearance, design, style, fashion, adornment, and the choice of material and fabric, for these things are within our reach. Improving the dress in these aspects may as well reform our intrinsic characteristics. It may serve as the path to lead us to our destination of refined disposition. It is because just as in the physical realm causes typically lead to effects, sometimes effects do lead to causes in the spiritual domain. However, a learned and experienced man, who is well aware of the relationship between causes and effects, is fully capable of reaching effects through causes, but a novice who is absolutely unaware of this relation is first taught to reach causes through effects, so that he ultimately develops the skill to reach effects through causes.

For instance, the cause of eating food is appetite. But a newborn baby has no appetite and, therefore, he is unable to reach food through this route. So, he is gradually fed

various types of foods to activate his appetite, and then this appetite slowly accustoms the baby to eating solid food and stops him from breastfeeding.

Or, for example, ask a tobacco addict whether he first had a craving for tobacco which compelled him to consume it, or he began to crave after consuming it for a certain period of time which later became a habit? Apparently, consumption precedes the craving – which is the cause of consumption – in such addictive items. But then craving and addiction become the cause of regular consumption independent of any other external factor.

In the same manner, in order to develop a liking for the dress of pious men and to grow an urge for it in one's heart independent of external factors, a novice – who is unmindful of the relation between clothing and human disposition and incapable to reach the best kind of dress through the best moral values – is first required – in the light of the above-mentioned principle – to adopt a dress acceptable in the eyes of Islam, so that regular use of the pious dress inculcate in him the desire and the refined taste of clothing. As a result, he will develop a natural urge for the same clothing which he was initially forced to use.

Reforming the character through reforming the actions

Going along with this principle, all the spiritual mentors and reformers of the world have chosen the path of reforming the actions in order to reform the character. Even all the revealed religions are in agreement that in the initial stage, one needs to be forced and pressurized for virtuous practices, so that repeated practice and exercise ingrain the virtue of the act in his heart and, consequently, the actions which were at first

performed out of compulsion with no inner motivation, begin to be performed effortlessly. And after this regular exercise, they become so natural and an ingrained part of the character that not doing them gets difficult and burdensome.

This is why Islam has advised to feign crying in order to instill the fear of Allah in one's heart, so that shedding tears with Allah's fear becomes his habit. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Weep, and if you cannot weep then pretend to weep."(107)

For the same reason, Muslims are commanded to make their children practice for obligatory prayers to inculcate the sentiments of sincerity and servitude, so that it becomes easy for them to pray after reaching maturity. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Command your children to pray when they become seven years old, and beat them for it (prayer) when they become ten years old."(108)

Likewise, to ingrain the feelings of total submission, Islam ordered its followers to force themselves to act upon its teachings, so that they gradually begin to practice Islam spontaneously. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Submit even if you do not like."(109)

Of course, the fear of Allah, the sincerity, the servitude, and the submission in the above situations will be mere superficial with no spirit and earnestness. But ultimately, these superficial acts will automatically incorporate the soul and essence of virtue.

In short, the only way to stimulate the goodness of dress that is concealed or dormant inside the heart –

(107) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 4196.
(108) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 495.
(109) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 1:93, no. 410.

according to this religious, logical, as well as natural principle – is to first make one use the clothing of pious men, so that the dormant goodness inside him wakes up and he develops the habit of wearing this virtuous dress on account of his now reformed urges. The same clothing for which he had to force himself earlier now becomes part of his character. And then this pure dress – which is acceptable in the eyes of Shariah – having incorporated the spirit of virtue, becomes a lifelong habit with all of its everlasting benefits.

The criteria for acceptable and unacceptable dress

Now, what remains to explore is the practical example and ideal of an acceptable dress that everyone must imitate in order to attain its goodness. What comes to my mind in this regard is that since intrinsic qualities are the main players when it comes to clothing, and it is these qualities on which depend the acceptability or unacceptability of a dress – as discussed earlier – so now it is not difficult to understand that the legitimate criteria and practical example of a good dress is the dress of people who are endowed with the best innate disposition; those who are the pivot of Godly characteristics; and by whose virtue the world got to know the very definition of high moral values. Any clothing that these people adopt, recommend, or approve will be the most beneficial, the most spiritual, the most legitimate, and the purest of all. Conversely, any clothing adopted by people who are far away from Godly characteristics, who are unaware of ethical values, and who are deep in the filth of immoral and wicked disposition will be the most harmful, materialistic, illicit, impure, unacceptable and unworthy of imitation.

Everyone knows that the first group are the Prophets of Allah who have nurtured the tree of good morals with

their pure heart and the whole world is garnering its fruits. And the second group is the group of charlatans and leaders of misguidance whose barren hearts have dried up the very seed of Godly morals, so they produce nothing but carnal and materialistic desires, the darkness whereof has engulfed the entire globe.

The former class have – on account of their virtuous character – attained Divine acceptance, and their every style, every practice, every guise, and every impression being the manifestation of their character has met Divine approval. They have become the role model for the rest of the world. Some of their practices have been made obligatory, some strongly recommended, some desirable, and some permissible. And the later faction – on account of their wicked nature – were declared doomed, and all their practices were denounced and rejected by the Almighty, no matter how much charming and attractive they appear. All humans were directed to shun their pattern. Some of their practices became acts of disbelief, some forbidden, some detestable, and some inappropriate.

What flows from this clear-cut criteria of clothing is that: If someone wants to purify his inherent character, he ought to imitate the clothing of the first group of pious men; and if someone wants his intrinsic disposition to stay wicked and evil, he should imitate the clothing of the second group.

This criteria of good dress also casts light on the primary objective of imitation; The imitation of Prophets aims at the perfection of intrinsic qualities, while the purpose of prohibiting the imitation of disbelievers is to prevent from the immoral characteristics and to purify them.

Degrees of imitation

There are two degrees of imitation in clothing: The degree of attaining virtues which is achieved by imitating Prophets of Allah, and the degree of avoiding vices which is accomplished by refraining from imitation of disbelievers. In other words, the first level comprises obligation and the second level comprises prohibition. Or, the first level is that of permission and the second level is that of forbiddance.

Then, both levels are further classified in two categories: strict rule (*'azīmah*) and relaxed rule (*rukhṣah*). It is because there are two types of permissible things that Prophets leave behind: First, their own practices. Second, the common law.

Their own practices – being the product of maximal will power – hold the highest and ideal status. However, not everybody is capable of following their example. It is only a special few who are endowed with this ability. As for the common law, it is easy to follow for everyone owing to its inclusiveness, flexibility, common applicability, and having contained thousands of essentially lawful things. The difficulties which common people may face in following the practices of Prophets become non-existent in the common law, which consists of thousands of injunctions having different legal statuses, and which are practicable by all.

So, the ideal level of imitation of the Prophets – or the level of *'azīmah* – is that our clothing fully corresponds to the usual clothing of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and our attire becomes exactly same as his regular attire. And the basic level – or the level of *rukhṣah* – is that we avoid prohibited kinds of garments and restrict ourselves to the permissible clothes that have been explicitly liked or

permitted by the Prophet (PBUH), or the ones that are deemed permissible under the general principle of lawfulness. The last one is also a form of imitation of the Prophet; even if not as the clothing he had used himself, but as part of the broader category of permissible attires to which even the particular attire of the Prophet (PBUH) belonged.

Just as the particular clothes worn by the Prophet (PBUH) enjoy the blessed attribution to him, so does the clothing permitted by him – being part of his commands and being in his knowledge. And this attribution is what otherwise known as imitation, no matter if it is a mirror image of Prophetic clothing or virtually same as that. Thus, the imitation of Prophet can also be divided in two levels: exact imitation and virtual imitation.

In other words, a Muslim will be seen as adhering to Shariah rulings and imitating the prophets when he uses a permissible dress. Therefore, this objection is absurd that even the clothing of the most pious men today does not fully match with the clothing of the Prophet (PBUH). Who wears a shirt today exactly same as the shirt of the Prophet? When did the Prophet use the attire that the religious men of this era use?

No doubt, the present day attires and the type of clothes that we use today were not worn by the Holy Prophet (PBUH), but he did not forbid them either. If these attires are not directly attributed to him, they are still attributed to him indirectly as part of the broader category of permissible clothing. And this clothing is to always remain permissible unless some anti-Islam nation adopts it as their symbol or it begins to be associated specifically with them.

Nevertheless, imitating the exact clothing of the Prophet (PBUH) is the ideal point and the highest degree of

imitation of pious men, whereas using any permissible clothing whatsoever is the lowest degree of this imitation. The former constitutes *'azīmah*, and the latter constitutes *rukhṣah* on which ends the domain of permissibility and lawfulness. Thus, staying within the boundary of permissibility is a Shariah obligation while acting upon *'azīmah* is not obligatory but highly desirable.

The dress of pious men and its religious significance

Here, one must not misconceive that the pious men of this age have acted upon *rukhṣah* instead of *'azīmah* out of laziness, heedlessness, or negligence. No! Actually they did it so that their clothing does not alienate them from other people; they do not become a center of public attention or a topic of discussion; and their unusual attire does not cause them to stand out or make them famous among the masses. So, in order to keep their hearts from the love of name and fame, they are required to choose clothing based on *rukhṣah*.

Furthermore, their compassionate nature and care for common folk also compels them to adopt ordinary dresses that help them mix with the people around, so that others should not be repulsive to them. Instead, common folk should manage to have – to some extent – the resemblance of pious men through imitating their ordinary clothing. Otherwise, if imitating the specific clothing of prophets was the only standard of imitation, no one could have reached this high level except a 'special few' among the Muslims and, consequently, the majority of ordinary men would have been deprived of its advantages. Undoubtedly, it would have been a narrowness and hardship on part of the religion, whereas the Almighty has said: "And He laid upon you no hardship in the religion." [Al- Ḥajj: 78]

Therefore, these 'special few' are, on the one hand, concerned about attaining the higher degrees, and on the other, they are worried about guiding and keeping the masses within the category of obedient servants. This concern and compassion lead them to adopt *rukhṣah* in public, and *azīmah* in private.

This is the reason the Companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them) – despite being extra zealous for imitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) – were considerate about their successors and sometimes sought *rukhṣah* in their clothing so as to make it easy for their successors to follow their path. This is why all the Companions did not use the same attire, rather they dressed up in clothes of different types and styles. They wore all types of permissible clothing; shirt, trouser, gown, robe, shawl, cap, turban and so on. Because, the Almighty had chosen men of various talents from every class of society to be the Prophet's Companions. Every companion had different personality and yet they were all characterized by piety and God-fearing. Among them were scholars and jurists, holy men and saints, Bedouins and city dwellers; There were ascetics like Abū Dharr al-Ghifāri and wealthy like Ibn 'Auf; There were staunch followers of Sunnah like Ibn 'Umar and celebrated lawmakers like 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. May Allah be pleased with them all.

Now, since these blessed personalities were equally characterized by piety, purity, and adherence to Sunnah, rather each companion was a manifestation of a specific aspect of Prophetic life, so the true Islam is confined to the circle of companions. Therefore, any Muslim from any social stratum who aspires to imitate the Holy Prophet will find a suitable

ideal among the diverse group of the Companions that he will be able to relate to and, ultimately, he will easily manage to pattern himself after the pious men.

Similarly, the successors of the Companions (*Tābi'ūn*) followed the footsteps of the Companions and left more lenient ideals in their legacy for the next generation. Then, as the time passed and upcoming generations became more and more neglectful and less and less concerned about their religion, the pious and the wise men of each generation carried on the custom of following footsteps of previous generation and facilitating a more lenient and easier exemplar for the weaker incomers of next generation as long as those exemplars did not cross the boundary line of piety, so that diverse Muslim societies always have abundant specimen of Islamic way of living at their hands; so that they stay away from non-Islamic lifestyles; and so that every Muslim enjoys the blessings of resemblance with pious men at every juncture of his life.

The Shariah has also followed this sequence. Just as it encouraged Muslims to follow the example of the Prophet, saying: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example" [Al-Aḥzāb: 21], in the same manner, the Prophet (PBUH) himself encouraged to follow the example of his Companions: "My companions are like stars, whoever of them you follow, you will be rightly guided."[110]

Just like Companions followed the example of the Prophet, the successors (*Tābi'ūn*) followed the example of

(110) Abū ‘Abdullāh `Ubaidullāh bin Muḥammad bin Baṭṭah, *al-Ibānah al-Kubrā* (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāyah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘) 2:564, no. 702.

the Companions and left their own examples for the upcoming generations. The Great Muslim Caliph, ʻUmar bin ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz, once said:

> "The Messenger of Allah and those in authority after him left examples to which we adhere in order to affirm the Book of Allah, to complete His obedience, and to uphold His religion; Whoever acts upon it, he will be rightly guided; Whoever seeks help from it, he will be helped; Whoever defies it, he will be following a path other than the path of the believers and Allah will let him pursue what he has chosen and will then burn him in Hell—what an evil end." (111)

And for the later generations, the Noble Qur'an designated the pious, the righteous, the truthful, and the devout men as the ideal and role model for the masses of this Ummah. At one place, it said: "And follow the way of those who turn to Me ˹in devotion˺." [Luqmān: 15]

At other places it said: "O believers! Be mindful of Allah and be with the truthful." [At-Tawbah: 119] and: "O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you." [An-Nisā: 59]

In short, the first model to imitate, according to Islamic Shariah, is the example of the Prophet (PBUH), followed by the example of his Companions, followed by the example of the pious men of this Ummah who have been – by virtue of their perfect adherence to Prophetic traditions

(111) Yūsuf ibn ʻAbd Allāh Ibn ʻAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʻ Bayān al-ʻIlm wa Faḍlihi*, Edited by: Abu al-Ashbāl al-Zuhayrī (Saudi Arabia: Dār ibn al-Jawzī, 1994), 2:1176, no. 2326.

and thorough understanding of religion – conferred the title of 'the ones in authority'; those who have developed a remarkable skill of deriving guidance from the scripture for every new problem thanks to their profound knowledge of Islam; those who possess exceptional genius to meet the ever-changing requirements of modern age; those who have received the titles of the pious, the religious, the dutiful, and the truthful owing to their sustained commitment to Prophetic model; and those whose pure hearts receive divine inspiration just like the blessed hearts of the Prophets receive divine revelation which enables them to comprehend the objectives of Shariah and to readily use them as and when required.

Indeed, obeying such blessed personalities will be the same as obeying the Prophet (PBUH), and imitating them in clothing will be the same as imitating the Prophet (PBUH) himself, since all of their practices spring from the practices of the Prophet (PBUH) and their very existence on the face of the earth is a Divine favor; because even when they act upon *rukhṣah*, they are actually carrying out the *'azīmah* under the veil of *rukhṣah*.

It is these special few who stick to the imitation of the righteous when drastic changes in cultural and social norms and major upheavals in the fashions of clothing engulf all. It is them who manage to find some permissible ways in the ever-changing fashions and styles that attract the common minds, so that the masses may pursue their interests while staying within the limits set by Allah. In this way, they make it easy for common people to emulate the righteous in any given period of time.

To sum up, *'azīmah* and *rukhṣah* both degrees of permissible clothing are counted as 'the imitation of

prophets'. So, the reason why the pious men of this Ummah adopted *rukhṣah* in clothing – instead of *'azīmah* – is not because they follow their desires, but in order to reform themselves and the whole Muslim nation at large, as explained in the previous paragraphs.

It also becomes evident from this discussion that the real standard and criterion for imitation of the righteous in the clothing of every period will be the clothing of the learned and pious men of that period. The Islamic attire of every era will be the attire that is commonly used by the devout men of that era. As for the clothing that is neither generally used by the pious men nor is the specific symbol of the enemies of Allah, such clothing will be essentially permissible and neither using it will be mandatory nor avoiding it. However, the ordinary people are advised – as a precautionary measure – to ask the special few before using such clothing. Because, things that are permissible in Shariah hold the same status as things that are possible in the physical composition of the universe; that neither their existence nor inexistence is necessary. Same is the case with permissible things that neither doing them nor leaving them is necessary. Yet sometimes doing them is recommended to gain some benefit, and sometimes not doing them is advised to avoid a harm.

In other words, things that are essentially permissible are capable of producing both benefits and harms pertaining to the religion. Therefore, any new attire that is not generally used by the pious and learned men should only be adopted after contemplating its positive and negative effects, since the benefits or harms of such attire are not yet visible, and ordinary people are, evidently, incapable of looking beyond

the surface; their vision cannot reach the core of the issue and discern the underlying benefits or harms; and they are unable to apply Shariah principles to new issues. Thus, they are required to seek the opinions of the knowledgeable – regarding such innovative attires – whose profound knowledge and deep insight allows them to see things in the perspective of their positive or negative outcomes.

If these insightful individuals prohibit a newly invented attire – in view of its ensuing harms – and disapprove its usage overlooking its immediate benefits, then their decision cannot be challenged arguing that this attire is essentially lawful, for it is quite possible that one thing is fundamentally permissible but declared impermissible or disliked on the basis of an external factor. However, identifying that external factor is a task vested with the insightful men alone.

Anyway, if any clothing – apart from the newly invented ones – is worthy to be the criterion for good and bad clothing, it is the attire of the pious and righteous personalities of every age and every region whose righteousness is acknowledged by the majority of this Ummah, and whose knowledge and piety are undeniable. Any clothing that resembles their clothing will be part of Islam, and any attire that is used after consulting them will be within the limits of Shariah. Imitating them and obeying their commands will be the only way for the masses to imitate the righteous. Nevertheless, wearing the same attire as they do will constitute *'azīmah* for common people, while using new attires after seeking their opinion will be counted as *rukhṣah.* Accordingly, staying within the limits of permissible clothing will be mandatory, whereas imitating them in dress will be recommended and desirable.

Prohibited Dresses

The prohibited kind of dresses may also be categorized in two levels: *'azīmah* and *rukhṣah*. In this context, *'azīmah* is that one avoids imitation of not only disbelievers but also of sinners, wrongdoers, and impious persons in his clothing. This is the highest and the ideal degree of piety. The *rukhṣah*, on the other side, is that one only refrains from imitating the distinctive symbols and specific dresses of infidels and enemies of Islam. This is the most basic degree of piety, below which there is no other degree. Thus, imitating the people of other faiths in their specific and distinctive clothes (which distinguish a non-Muslim from Muslims) is totally forbidden, while assuming the semblance of sinners and transgressors will be categorized – as per the intensity of sin – as detestable, undesirable, inappropriate, and so on.

One more thing comes to my mind at this point: Imitation of the righteous men is required in Islam and imitation of the wicked persons is forbidden. So, former demands an action while letter calls for prevention. Hence, the former is naturally concerned with garnering spiritual and moral benefits whereas the letter is concerned with avoiding the spiritual and moral harms. Then, it is a common knowledge that avoiding harm is preferred over garnering benefits and, therefore, refraining from the imitation of the wicked is more important than imitating the righteous. In fact, just as physicians generally stress more on prevention than cure, and just like spiritual doctors (the Prophets of Allah) insist more on refraining from sins than doing good deeds, the issue of imitation should also be dealt with the same approach; that Muslims should be more careful about

avoiding the imitation of the wicked than donning the appearance and attire of the righteous.

No wonder the Islamic Shariah has enlarged more on issues concerning the imitation of the wicked than it did on the imitation of the righteous, and it is for this reason that it has placed great emphasis on refraining from the former, because avoiding all the prohibited dresses is compulsory while using all the permissible dresses is not mandatory. Therefore, the issue of avoiding the imitation must be crystal clear for everyone with all its underlying details, since harm must be avoided at all costs. As for the issue of imitating the righteous, it is enough to briefly highlight its important points without going into details, since small benefit can also be sufficient.

Moreover, even common sense tells us that the easiest, shortest, and wisest way to train human mind is to give a detailed introduction of forbidden clothing and then to either keep quiet about the permissible clothing or to briefly point out its principles, for the number of forbidden clothing has always been limited whereas the number of permissible clothing is limitless. In fact, no cloth that covers the body has ever been essentially unlawful, it is only after it gets associated to any other nation and becomes their distinct sign that it turns impure as well as impermissible, and obviously, such distinctive clothes are very less in number compared to other normal clothes. Thus, any clothing that becomes a distinct sign of any other nation in any period of time will be declared impermissible, and imitating it will become prohibited. It goes without saying that the number of such clothes will never be hard to count.

For this reason, there was no need to specify a particular clothing when it comes to imitating the righteous – although one needs to consult religious scholars before using a new attire, as explained earlier – as permissible dresses were innumerable; some of which were used by the Holy Prophet (PBUH), some by his Companions, and some by the pious men of each generation. As for the imitation of other nations, there is a need to specify the attires that are specific to particular nations and which serve as their distinctive signs and identifying symbols.

This is why the Shariah has rarely mentioned individual examples of righteous clothing that ought to be imitated, but it has enlarged on the subject of impure and impermissible clothing of non-Muslim nations whose resemblance must be avoided. This signifies that avoiding the resemblance of non-Muslims is more important than emulating the righteous, and that maintaining a clear distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims is one of the most significant and fundamental objectives of Islam.

The upcoming discussion will make it clear that Islamic Shariah has retained this distinction in the clothing of each and every body part by drawing a dividing line after every element of similarity between believers and disbelievers. If both Muslims and non-Muslims were equal in covering their bodies with clothes, Islam assigned different clothes for its adherents. If the clothing too became similar, it created the difference by some other means. For instance, Islam has urged its devotees to cover their head in order to oppose the nations who do not use head covering. If there are some nations that cover their heads with cape, it has instructed its followers to use turban. If others begin to use both cap and turban, it has ordered to change the

style of cap and turban. If others start to have the same style, it has asked to use turban of different colors and different designs. The purpose of all this is to retain distinctions between Muslims and non-Muslims even in appearance, just as the two are different in reality.

Following are some examples where Islam insisted upon avoiding the imitation of non-Muslim in order to appear different from them. And the objective behind these directives is to protect believers from the negative effects of disbelief which is an inevitable outcome of their imitation.

Head covering

First of all, let's look at head covering. Covering one's head with a piece of cloth is a significant way to appear different from those non-Muslim nations who customarily keep their heads uncovered. As for nations that traditionally use headgears, the key is to keep the form and style of the headgear distinguishable.

Head covering is mostly helpful in distinguishing the members of one nation from the other. Especially when most nations have lost their clothing distinctions and identities, using a headgear – such as cap and turban – and its form and style are the only way to recognize the national identity of its wearer. There are numerous examples in the history wherein the predecessors of this Ummah prohibited Muslims from using a particular kind of cap or turban that had become associated to people of any other faith and had turned into their distinctive sign, with an aim to stop common men from copying them.

There are many communities whose distinctive sign is that they do not use any kind of head covering. For example, Sanyasi Hindus (hermits) in the ancient times kept

their heads uncovered as a religious practice, and today's Christian and Bengali communities avoid using headgear as a cultural practice. Contrary to this, Islam urged its followers to cover their heads and made it a distinctive symbol of Muslims, specially using turban which is an elegant and graceful clothing. Otherwise, the mere objective of covering one's head can be achieved by wearing cap.

It is reported that Allah's Apostle (PBUH) said: "Wear turban, be different from those who came before you."(112)

However, at the same time, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) also specified the limitation for moderate use of turban so that one does not trouble himself by keeping it wrapped throughout day and night. He said: "Covering the head in daytime is wise and at night is deception."(113)

Then, if the whole world begins to wear turban to imitate Muslims – as happened during the golden age of Islam when it dominated the world and every nation admired Islamic attires – then the difference will be maintained in color. Ḥalbī narrates that in the period of Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, Christians used to wear blue colored turbans and Jews yellow colored turbans, so he issued a fatwa that Muslims are not allowed to wear yellow and blue colored turbans.(114)

If people of other religions do not use turban of a specific color, then the distinguishing factor will be the method of wrapping it. For instance, the way Rajputs and

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(112) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15:306, no. 41137.
(113) Ibid, 15:307, no. 41144.
(114) Al-Dimyāṭī, Ḥusn al-Siyar.

Sikhs wrap their turbans is considered non-Islamic, even if Muslims use the same method. And the way Afghans, Kashmiris and Punjabi Muslims wrap it is considered Islamic, even if Hindus also wrap it in the same manner. So, these names give turbans kind of a distinct identity. And in case no visible difference could be maintained, then there must be a hidden factor that will at least give a different feel to Muslims, even though others may not see it, so as to keep the sense of distinction alive. The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said: "Indeed what distinguishes between us and between the idolater is the turban over the cap."[(115)]

Obviously, the Prophetic instruction to wear turban over the cap is not meant for merely covering the head, as it can be done by just wearing the cap or just the turban. Moreover, it is not meant to create a visible distinction either, since the cap is hidden under the turban. Thus, it is clear that this instruction is meant to retain the difference in one way or another; if not visible then invisible, so that it always remains in Muslim minds and whenever they wrap turban over the cap, they remember that they are doing this to be different from non-Muslims. This small act will keep refreshing the significance of preserving this difference in their minds, and then this sentiment will not stop at turban and cap alone, rather it will expand itself to all aspects of their social lives.

Turban under the chin

Some Jews and Christians used to wear turban as far down as their chins. Many Hindu villagers also wrap turban in this fashion. When this practice reached the level of imitation, it was disliked.

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(115) At-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith no. 1784.

In the account of Al-Ḥasan bin Muḥammad, Imām Aḥmad is represented as greatly disliking the use of turbans below the lower jaw and saying that such was a common practice among the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians.(116)

Cap

If a particular style of cap becomes the symbol of a non-Muslim individual or community, it will become forbidden for Muslims. Al-Dimyāṭī stated while describing the situation at the time of Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī that when Jews and Christians abandoned turbans and adopted red conical cap and tall black hat respectively, the scholars of that time strictly barred Muslims from using these caps. This strict position of the scholars was actually based on the Shariah maxim introduced by the Jurists of Islam that: the ruler should punish a Muslim who wears a cap that is specifically used by non-Muslims. Some scholars even went to the extent of declaring this act of imitation as the act of *kufr*, for the usage of such caps although does not entail disbelief in itself, it is indeed an indication of one's inclination to disbelief.

It is stated in Fatāwa Khāzin and al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyyah: "One maybe declared *kāfir* for placing the cap of Zoroastrians on his head."(117)

Shawl and lower garment

The basic clothing that covers the rest of the body – besides the head – comprises *ridā'* (outer wrapping garment/shawl) and *izār* (lower garment tied to the waist covering the lower half of the body). The Jews had adopted extreme form of self-restraint and relied upon a single piece of cloth to cover

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(116) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:277.
(117) *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1310 AH), 2:272.

the entire body. This practice was known as *iḥtibā'* and *ishtimāl*. The Messenger of Allah instructed regarding this: "Do not imitate Jews, if one of you does not find but one cloth, he should use it as *izār* (to cover the lower half with it instead of entire body)."(118)

Silk lining

If a cloth has silk lining, its prohibition is evident. The wisdom behind this prohibition is to uproot over indulgence in comforts and luxuries, but the apparent reason is imitation of other communities. The following excerpt from a long hadith narrated by Abū Raiḥāna indicates this meaning: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) forbade ten things (among them are): "men putting silk at the bottom of their garments like Persians."(119)

The phrase 'like Persians' demonstrates that the reason of this prohibition is similarity with Persians, otherwise the use of silk is anyway forbidden for men. It shows that imitation alone is the primary cause for this injunction, even though there are other causes as well.

Badges and emblems

Non-Muslims, specially Christians, have this custom of wearing beautiful and colorful badges on their arms or shoulders at festivals and social events, and they wear black badges at the moments of grief. These badges or ribbons are ceremonial to mark the occasions of happiness or sadness.

The Prophet (PBUH) forbade this practice to avoid the resemblance of disbelievers. Moreover, Muslims are

(118) 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'āni, *Muṣannaf 'Abd Al-Razzāq*, 1:352, Hadith no. 1372.

(119) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4049.

supposed to be natural and straightforward, not slaves of rites and rituals. In another excerpt from the above cited narration of Abū Raiḥāna, Allah's Apostle forbade: "Putting silk on their shoulders like Persians."[120]

For the same purpose of refraining from the imitation of disbelievers, Imām Abū Yūsuf and Imām Muḥammad bin Ḥasan al-Shaybāni strictly disapproved silk curtains, silk bed sheets, and silk mattresses, as these things resemble the luxurious and extravagant lifestyle of unbelievers and produce the same types of immoral effects.

Belts and girdles

Traditionally, Jews used to wear a particular type of girdle or waistband (just like Christian priests today wear Cincture; a silken rope-like article tied on the waist). For this reason, Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal had issued a fatwa prohibiting the use of girdle (not only the one used by Jews, but any type of girdles that were common among Arabs) over a shirt while offering prayer, so that Muslim worshippers do not share any similarity with Jews even in outward matters.

> Al-Kirmānī says: I asked Aḥmad about a man who wears girdle on his waist while offering prayer. He replied that there is no problem if he wears it over a cloak, but he disliked the use of girdle over the shirt and deemed it a feature of Jewish garb.[121]

Color of garments

After purifying the whole attire from resemblance of disbelievers, Islam also cared to protect the colors of

(120) Ibid.
(121) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:399.

garments from their imitation. Yellow and saffron colors, having been mostly used by disbelievers and the wicked, were declared forbidden for Muslim adults and children alike. Ḥanafī school of jurisprudence also dislike the use of these colors.

> 'Abd Allāh bin ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ reported: “Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saw me wearing two clothes dyed in saffron. whereupon he said: These are the clothes (usually worn by) the non-believers, so do not wear them.” In another version: “Allah's Apostle (ﷺ) saw me in two clothes dyed in saffron, whereupon he said: Has your mother ordered you to do so? And I said: I will wash them. He said: But burn them.”[122]

The Prophet’s command to burn the cloth reflects the severity of this matter and the stern attitude a Muslim is required to display when it comes to imitating unbelievers. Although the cloth dyed in saffron will lose its color after it is washed and, therefore, its use will become lawful, but the Prophet wanted to eliminate very foundation of imitation that may, at some point of time, make this similarity in color seem a trivial and insignificant matter in the eyes of the Muslim.

Finger ring

Finger ring is one of the adornments of human body and, as a means of beautification, it is deemed a part of overall clothing. Islam has disapproved any kind of association to or similarity with unbelievers in the rings. For example, it has

(122) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* Hadith no. 2077.

disapproved rings made of lead, brass, copper, or iron because brass and copper are mostly used by disbelievers to make idols and utensils. So, these metals are in a way specific to making idols. Similarly, some non-Muslim nations have adopted iron as their religious symbol. For instance, today Sikhs wear iron bangle as part of their religion and it has become a symbol of their faith, and Hindu Yogis have chains and tongs made of iron as their hallmark. In short, many non-Muslim communities have a special relation with these metals, and thus, the Shariah did not like the use of these metals for such a visible article of adornment, i.e., finger ring.

> Narrated ‘Abd Allāh bin Buraydah from his father who said: "A man wearing an iron ring came to the Prophet (ﷺ). So he said to him: 'What is this I see on you, jewelry of the people of the Fire?' Then he came wearing a ring of brass. So he said: 'What is this smell of idols I sense on you?' Then he came wearing a ring of gold. So he said to him: 'What is this jewelry of the people of Paradise I see on you?' So he said: 'What should I use then?' He said: 'From silver, but not its entire weight."[123]

This hadith sheds light on the position of Shariah regarding jewelry, ornament and all kinds of articles of adornment. For women, all such ornaments that share similar features with non-Muslims will be forbidden. For example, wearing a chain made of gold or silver around waist which is

(123) At-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith no. 1785.

a symbol of Hindus, or tying a garland around waist which is a tradition of Hindu women. Similarly, it is forbidden for men to wear wristwatches with chains and straps that make it look like jewelry, and make men appear like women. Likewise, anything even remotely suggestive of assimilation of features that make men look like women, believers like unbelievers, or the upholders of truth like the followers of falsehood will be absolutely prohibited.

If non-Muslims also use rings, Muslims should change the way of using it. Ibn Taymiyyah quoted Shaykh ʿAbdul Qādir Jīlānī and some other scholars of Islamic jurisprudence: "It is preferable to wear ring in the left hand, because wearing it in the right hand is the habit and sign of those who innovate in religion."(124)

Regarding maintaining the dissimilarity between Muslims and non-Muslims, I heard from my elders that my grandfather, Ḥujjat al-Islām Maulana Muḥammad Qāsim, never in his life attached buttons to his Achkan (which he would wear without a shirt underneath) because it was a practice of Christians. He always used hooks or fasteners made of cloth instead.

Shoes

The last thing a human wears on his body is shoe which marks the end of clothing. Islam even cared about protecting the shoes from imitation of others. There are some communities who give up shoes, walk barefoot, and regard it a form of worship. So, Islam made it mandatory to wear shoes in order to be different from them. The Prophet

(124) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:401.

(PBUH) said about himself: “I have been commanded to wear shoes.”[125]

Then, there are other non-Muslim nations that wear shoes and are similar to Muslims in this respect. Therefore, it was necessary to use different type of shoes to avoid their similarity in this piece of body covering which sometimes becomes a mark of national identity.

Ibn Taymiyyah, in his treatise ‘Iqtiḍā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm’, mentioned names of various kinds of shoes that were commonly used in the middle ages, such as: Sindī shoes, Kermānī shoes, Khashab (wooden) shoes, and Sibtī shoes.

Sindī shoes were specifically used by Zoroastrians. Al-Marwazī says that Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal was asked to give his opinion about Sindī shoes. He replied: “As for me, I do not use it, but it is alright to use them in lavatory and for ablution. And he disapproved their use for adornment, saying that it was an item of the non-Arab garb.” Ibn Taymiyyah commented on this: “It is probably because Aḥmad disliked walking in them on the streets.”[126]

So, Imām Aḥmad approved the use of Sindī shoes only at the time of necessity and that is too inside the house. Even that he had allowed for others and not for himself, lest it leads to imitation of others.

Kermānī shoes were also disliked by scholars of Islam because they were not the common garb of Muslims. Ibn al-Mubārak was asked about Kermānī shoes, he

(125) ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15:410, no. 41609.

(126) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:273-274.

expressed his dislike and said: “Is this (the usual sandal of Muslims) not sufficient for you?”(127)

When inquired about wooden sandals, Imām Aḥmad replied: “There is no problem if the situation requires wearing them.”(128) The reason is that wooden sandals (Khadau) were mostly used by non-Muslim hermits and Yogis. Therefore, their usage was permitted at the time of necessity, such as while bathing or performing ablution, but disallowed for general usage.

Among all these types, the predecessors only liked Sibtī sandals, for it was used by the Holy Messenger (PBUH) himself. It was narrated that Ibn ‘Umar said: “The Prophet [PBUH] used to wear Sibtī sandals.”(129)

Aḥmad bin Ibrāhīm al-Dauraqī sought the opinion of Sa‘īd bin ‘Āmir (one of the teachers of Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and a senior scholar of Basra) about Sibtī sandals, to which he remarked: “The garb of our Prophet is dearer to us than the garb of Bakhan, the Indian king.”(130)

The above examples exhibit how much concerned and diligent our pious predecessors were when it came to protecting the religion from foreign elements. They would even put restrictions on things that were not explicitly forbidden in Shariah aiming to preserve Islam in its original and purest form.

Apart from clothing, the Shariah also disallowed imitating non-Muslims in garments that are not put on the

(127) Ibid, 1:275.
(128) Ibid, 1:274.
(129) Aḥmad ibn Shu`ayb al-Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, Hadith no. 5244.
(130) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:275.

body but are still used for bodily comfort, like mattress, cushion, saddlecloth, and curtain.

Animal skins

Skins of lions, leopards, and other beasts are often used by Yogis and non-Muslim hermits or by arrogant kings and rich people. Therefore, the Prophet (PBUH) forbade its use for Muslims.

It was narrated that Mu'āwiyah said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to forbid riding on leopard skins."(131) Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī said commenting on this hadith: It is because this was the custom of non-Arabs.(132)

Saddlecloth

On the same account, the Prophet (PBUH) forbade the use of '*maytharah*', a red colored saddlecloth that non-Arabs used on saddle as a matter of pride, and it had become a symbol of their lavish lifestyle.

Narrated Ibn 'Āzib: "The Prophet (PBUH) forbade us to use the red saddlecloth."(133) Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī commented: It is because it was a saddlecloth of non-Arabs.(134)

Gender Differences

Islam has laid down the rules of imitation for women just as it did for men. The motive of these rules is to maintain outward dissimilarities among various classes, nations, and

(131) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 3656.
(132) ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Qārī, *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2002), 7:2786, no. 4355.
(133) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 5838.
(134) ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Qārī, *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ*, 7:2787, no. 4356.

communities so that each group remains distinguishable from others and, at the same time, their moral state and ethical condition can be improved. Evidently, these motives are as much significant for women as they are for men.

Women and men are two varieties of the same species. These two genders have been created for different purposes and their requirements are also different. This is why it is inevitable for men and women, on account of their natural differences, to have dissimilarities in their outward appearance as well as internal disposition.

Differences between men and women

Islam did not tolerate to see women imitating men or men imitating women in their clothing. Abū Hurayrah narrated: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) cursed the man who dressed like a woman and the woman who dressed like a man."[(135)]

Women in the era of the Prophet (PBUH) used to cover their heads with a piece of cloth and to keep it on its place, they would twist the cloth and then wrap it around their heads. Umm Salmah narrates that once the Messenger of Allah came to her while she was wrapping the head covering, and he said: "Give it one twist, not two." The reason was that giving it two twists would make it look like men's turban and would take away the distinction between the two genders, which was placed for many benefits and various purposes.

Differences among women

Owing to differences in terms of interests and requirements, Islam has even categorized women into different classes and

(135) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4098.

has placed some distinctions among them for the ease of identification. Free-born girls and slave-girls are two separate classes of the same gender, each having its distinct set of requirements and interests. Each class has its own status and role in the society and, therefore, Islam has assigned separate features of identification for each group.

Ṣafiyyah bint Abī ‘Ubaydah narrated that ‘Umar once saw a woman going out wearing *khimār* (head covering) and *jilbāb* (burqa). He inquired about her and was informed that she was a slave-girl belonging to someone from his own family. ‘Umar immediately approached Ḥafṣah (his daughter) and got enraged at her, saying: “What motivated you to cover your slave-girl with *khimār* and *jilbāb* and make her resemble free women. I was about to punish her thinking she was a free woman.”(136)

In other reports, Umar is reported hitting the *jilbāb* off slave-woman and saying: “How come a slave-girl is assuming the semblance of free women.”(137)

Quran had ordered free women to cover themselves with head scarf and burqa in order to make them distinguishable from slaves and as a sign of respect for them. As for slave-girls, they were prevented from it for various reasons. The Holy Book says: “O Prophet, enjoin your wives and your daughters and the believing women, to draw a part of their outer coverings around them. It is likelier that they will be recognized and not molested.” [Al-Aḥzāb: 59]

Now, when Islam did not allow imitation between men and women as well as among different classes of

(136) ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15:486, no. 41926.
(137) Ibid, no. 41928.

Muslim women – on account of the differences found in the purpose of creating them and in order to preserve their respective roles and identities – how was it possible for Islam to let Muslim women imitate non-Muslims in their garbs. Moreover, the Shairah injunctions pertaining to imitation – that have already been discussed in great detail – apply on women just as they do on men. Therefore, it is not allowable, at any rate, for a Muslim woman to imitate the clothing style of Christian, Zoroastrian, or Hindu women thereby intermixing with them and causing a stain on Islamic civilization.

All in all, the textual proofs from the Quran and Sunnah presented so far, along with a comprehensive analysis of clothing and its fashion, are enough to demonstrate that the Shariah law sent down directly from the Divine Court is concerned with outward appearance of Muslim garb as much as it is concerned with its inner characteristics. Just as this inclusive Divine Law has unveiled intrinsic disposition of clothes, in the same manner it has given out a treasure of guiding instructions for extrinsic features of Muslim attire.

Furthermore, the fact that the scholars of Muslim Ummah in every period, especially in the early period of Islam, have been extra cautious about the issue of imitation and have been strictly warning Muslims against imitating unbelievers even in small matters, exhibits their foresightedness, wisdom, and firmness in religion. One has to admit that had those protectors of religion not taken these preventive measures, then Islam would not have reached us in its original form. Had they adopted the same apologetic and compromising attitude that is today coated in beautiful

terminologies – like tolerance, pluralism, acceptance for all, liberty of though, enlightenment and so on – then Islam would have lost its identity long ago. In fact, those truly enlightened souls had realized that these seemingly trivial matters may not be explicitly forbidden, but they are conducive to forbidden for sure; they may not be major sins on their own, but they are certainly the stairway for major sins; and it is beyond doubt that every pathway leads to destination and every stairway leads to its terminus. This is why they prevented from the mildly disliked imitation in exactly the same way as they did from the outright forbidden one.

So, our pious predecessors exerted themselves – thanks to their firmness and profound understanding of religion – to make common Muslims contented with Islamic garb and disinterested in non-Islamic attire by inviting them to imitation of the righteous and preventing them from the imitation of others. They did this so that Muslims remain visibly recognizable from non-Muslims and no Muslim – in legal terms – receives the same treatment as non-Muslims do, for it would be highly insulting on part of the Muslim. Also, no Muslim – in moral terms – gets affected by the immoral effects of non-Muslim garb, since human attire is a reflection as well as influencer of human being's inherent character.

At last, all the guiding instructions of Islamic Shariah regarding imitation can be summarized in one point: Muslims must not get tempted by clothing of other nations lest they end up losing their distinctiveness. Instead, they should be contented with their simple lifestyle and be focused on the main goals of their lives.

Before Adopting the Garb of any other Nation

Before adopting the garb of any other nation, one must analyze their dominating traits. If they are, as a nation, dominated by materialistic and worldly characteristics, their clothing will channel the same qualities into the wearer's personality and will distance him from spirituality. If spiritual characteristics are their dominating feature, then one needs to make sure that their spirituality is marked with moderation and not extremism. If they reflect extremist tendency, their clothing will also be reflective of extremism and will lead the wearer to excessiveness and extravagance.

When a nation is totally free from immoderation, extravagance, and excessiveness – and it is characterized by moderation instead – then adopting their garb is not only allowed but also mandatory. However, there is only one nation on the surface of the earth that fits this criteria, that is, the Muslim nation provided that it is holding onto true Islam.

And for such a nation that boasts perfect spirituality, unparalleled moderation, and other exceptional traits, it is utterly shameful to get fascinated by the fashions of other flawed nations and to prefer their despicable garb over their own garb of piety.

Chapter Three

The Position of Shariah on Clothing and Deniers of the Concept of Imitation

This chapter comprises four sections:

Section one: The position of Shariah and objections by modern intellectuals

Section two: The hadith 'Whoever imitates a people is one of them': some doubts and their clarification

Section three: The hadith 'There is no monasticism in Islam' and its actual meaning

Section four: The foundation of the concept of imitation and final answer to the doubts pertaining to this issue.

Section One: The Position of Shariah and Objections by Modern Intellectuals

After exploring the concept of clothing in the light of Shariah in such an elaborate manner, it becomes evident that the issue of clothing is not merely cultural, social, or financial with no relation whatsoever to Islamic Shariah. Rather, it is a purely religious matter of which each and every aspect has been scrutinized by Islam, with Shariah having dealt with not only its subsidiary points but also the most basic and fundamental questions related to this subject. Therefore, this subject has no room for human intervention and no scope for their opinions. In other words, just as a Muslim is obligated to obey Shariah rules in all of his daily activities and all of his actions – including eating and drinking, sleeping and awaking, and even answering the call of nature – need to be guided by Islamic principles of ḥalāl and ḥarām, so is the case with his clothing that it must also be within the limits prescribed by Shariah. His garb must also be complaint to Islamic Shariah which has expounded – with enough details – the acceptable manner, form, material, and sources of clothing as well as its spiritual effects on the wearer.

However, in spite of such inclusive elaboration, some actually ignorant but self-appointed intellectuals and thinkers of so-called broad-minded and educated class came up with these surprising claims:

1- Viewing the matter of clothing through the rigid lenses of ḥalāl and ḥarām is a big mistake.
2- Islamic Shariah only deals with individual and subsidiary points related to this matter. The fundamental and overall subject of clothing is out of the purview of Shariah. Religion is not meant to

define fashions and styles of clothing, because this is a cultural and social thing and not a religious issue. In fact, Islam has given complete freedom in cultural and social affairs, as a hadith goes: "You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs."[138]

3- Muslim jurists have clarified that clothing is among the '*sunan al-zawā'id*' and not the basic tenets of Islam.
4- Imposing restriction on '*sunan al-zawā'id*' is against the ease endowed in the religion of Islam, as stated in the hadith "Religion is very easy".[139]

[Taken from a literary academic journal]

These claims can be summarized in two sentences:

1. Clothing is a worldly affair and not a religious one.
2. Man has total liberty in his worldly affairs, as suggested by the hadith "You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs."

As for the first part of this claim that 'clothing is a worldly affair', we strongly disagree with it. Clothing is definitely a religious affair which Islamic Shariah has covered from every conceivable angle. We have provided some examples in the previous pages of this book in which this matter has been considered from every possible direction; be it the form of clothes or their essence, their integral nature or their attribution, their intrinsic qualities or their effects, the permissible attires or the impermissible ones, the desirable dresses or the detestable ones, their design

(138) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2363.
(139) *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī,* no. 39.

and fashion or their inner characteristics, the promises of reward on acceptable garments and the warnings of punishment on unacceptable ones, the physical advantages and disadvantages or the spiritual ones; everything has been minutely clarified.

Now that Quran and Sunnah are full of these details, to claim that 'Clothing is not a religious affair but a cultural and social one' is nothing less than outrageous and sheer ignorance.

Are all these details and all the principles of clothing highlighted by Shariah constitute subsidiary points? If these are the subsidiary points than what is the basic concept that the Shairah (as per your view) should have talked about but it did not? So according to you, Islam has left out such an important topic, and this flaw of Islam – God forbid – came to light only after fourteen centuries?

Furthermore, if this much elaboration is not enough to make an issue a religious matter, then what is the meaning of being a religious matter? And what is the criteria for an issue to be a matter of religion?

Additionally, apart from being incorrect, this claim is tantamount to finding fault with comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of Islamic Shariah for turning all natural affairs into religious ones, outlining Islamic manners for not only prayers and worships, but also for most trivial personal businesses, such as urinating and defecating, and for assimilate all these actions into forms of worship. Is the intention of these so-called intellectuals is that the Shariah should not care about clothing at all or it should not give any instructions in this regard? What an absurd wish they have! When a Muslim is not given a free hand in his personal

affairs – like eating and drinking, sleeping and awaking, urinating and defecating – how could he be left without the guidance of Shariah in such an important department of his life which even forms a part of his identity. It was never going to happen whether someone likes it or not.

In short, the claim that 'clothing is a cultural and social matter' is unworthy of consideration and a total misconception apart from being synonymous with associating a lie to God and blame to His perfect religion.

Then, the second claim that 'we have total freedom in worldly affairs' is equally unworthy of attention and a clear lie. It implies that the law of Allah is only applicable to prayers and worships, and it has no right to interfere with our customs and habits.

Apart from being a jibe at the inclusive nature of Islam, this claim also constitutes an objection – and even denial – of limitless powers of the Almighty. It implicates that according to these witless imbeciles, the Almighty should have no authority to interfere in our social customs or to oblige us to follow His law in our cultural affairs. Obviously, this amounts to blatant disbelief and plain heresy, no matter how much those self-titled enlightened souls try to hide it under deceiving words.

Moreover, if we believe that Shariah is all about traditions of the Prophet (PBUH), and his traditions have encompassed all aspects of human life including customs and creeds, godly life and social life, and religious affairs as well as worldly affairs, then what is the rationale behind the assumption that we are obligated to follow him in our religious affairs but are free in our worldly affairs? The same traditions that take away this freedom from us in religious

affairs, why should they not take it away in worldly affairs? Otherwise, one will have to admit that either the Prophet (PBUH) did not guide us in our worldly affairs or his guidance is not – God forbid – worthy of adherence. Apparently, both stances are erroneous, because the first one is contrary to reality and the second one is against Islamic faith. Therefore, following the Prophetic traditions is mandatory in worldly matters as much as it is mandatory in religious ones.

At this point, someone may argue that the Prophet has indeed given us instructions regarding worldly affairs but those instructions do not hold imperative or authoritative status rather they are advices and suggestions, and following the advices is not mandatory. My response to him will be that this is merely a claim with no evidence to prove it and, therefore, it is too early to discuss it. That said, even if we accept this claim as having a logical basis, we can never acknowledge that we are free to not comply with his suggestion. It is because the Prophetic advices carry worldly benefits along with the benefits of the afterlife, since matters of the afterlife are closely related to the deeds performed in the worldly life, and on the Day of Judgement every doing of this world – whether good or bad – shall be presented for reckoning. “So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” [Al-Zalzalah: 7-8]

So, even if following this advice is not mandatory in view of worldly benefits, it will definitely be mandatory in view of the benefits of the afterlife. Otherwise, denying the benefits of the afterlife, too, will amount to denying the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which Islam

can never tolerate. Thus, even regarding the Prophetic traditions as mere advices will not establish absolute freedom in worldly affairs.

I further assert that even if – let's assume – the Prophetic instructions pertaining to worldly affairs were nothing but advices, and obeying them was neither obligatory nor recommended, still it would be preferable to comply to them. The reason is that a good advice comes from someone who is the most knowledgeable and the most intelligent, and who can be more knowledgeable and more intelligent than the Holy Prophet (PBUH) whose opinion we can trust? Who can be wiser and more sagacious than the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) whose wisdom and shrewdness is recognized by not only Muslims but also geniuses of the world from among disbelievers? In fact, they acknowledge his sagacity even more than Muslims, for they deem the religion of Islam a product of his intellect. So, since the Prophet (PBUH) is more knowledgeable and more intelligent than the rest of the world, his advices should be given priority over the rest of advices and following them should be deemed mandatory. Also, an advice is a piece of knowledge, and knowledge should ideally be sought from someone more informed than us, let alone not following the advice of the most informed human being.

Furthermore, putting aside all the arguments, the least the adherence to his advices does is that it pleases the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), and what can be dearer to his lovers than his pleasure? Which asset can be more valuable than his happiness? Keeping in mind that it is this bounty that attracts all other bounties and blessings, and it is this virtue that is the fountainhead of all other goodness and virtues of both worlds.

In a nutshell, a Muslim cannot be given absolute freedom in his worldly affairs after coming of Prophetic advisories, as proved already in the light of Shariah, logic, traditions, as well as ethics, because the traits that define a Muslim are submission and surrender, as opposed to being the slave of his own desires. “Some of them will ˹eventually˺ believe in it; others will not. And your Lord knows best the corruptors.” [Yūnus: 40]

In fact, it is a huge blessing in itself that Islam did not bind its devotees to follow the advices of the Prophet (PBUH), but those self-proclaimed intellectuals who refused to surrender before the real wise men could not understand its significance. They failed to comprehend even basic objectives of Shariah owing to their arrogance and undue trust on their flawed understanding. Actually, the reason why some prophetic instructions are treated as mere recommendations and Muslims are not obligated to obey them and have freedom – to some extent – to not follow his instructions is not because those instructions were lacking something or because a better opinion could have been formulated. No, this is not the reason. The actual reason is that if it was obligatory to follow those instructions, the majority of common Muslims – except a special few – would have fallen in the sin of disobeying the Prophet and, consequently, they would have been among the people of Hellfire. It is because complying to prophetic instructions pertaining to general affairs all the time would have been a very difficult task and disobedience would have been more prevailing among Muslims than obedience. And apparently, this violation of Shariah obligations would have called for punishment and, as a result, the majority of this Ummah would have gone to Hellfire instead of Paradise.

For this reason – and owing to its merciful nature – the Shariah did not include the worldly affairs in the obligatory matters but in the recommended ones, and it further encouraged Muslims to act upon these recommendations by revealing their benefits. Hence, the status of prophetic instructions as recommendations and advices is not meant to grant absolute autonomy to reckless individuals, rather it is meant to keep the masses from sins and to open the doors of ease and blessing for them in this life as well as the afterlife. Now, we should ask ourselves whether it is the way to express our gratefulness on this huge blessing by disregarding the Prophetic advisory which is the epitome of knowledge and wisdom? Is it appropriate to choose our immature opinions over these jewels of rationality and intelligence? Or should we appreciate this bounty by adhering to Prophetic instruction as if they were binding commands? Should we not disregard our naive opinions and stick to his advices instead? Obviously, anyone with sound intellect will choose the second option.

Anyway, the Prophetic instructions – regardless of whether they are binding or non-binding – take away the absolute freedom and autonomy in worldly affairs (which begin as 'worldly matters' and culminate in the 'matters of afterlife'). These traditions do not leave room for anyone to add or subtract anything from Shariah, let alone the futile attempts to derive absolute autonomy from these same traditions.

As far as the hadith "You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs" is concerned, the attempts to prove absolute freedom using this hadith amount to distorting its

meaning which ensues from lack of the fear of God, lack of knowledge, and lack of understanding. The hadith only mentions that you are more aware of worldly affairs, it doesn't say that you have total freedom to do whatever you want.

Inferring the freedom from knowledge is like interpreting the text in a way that suits the interpreter's interests and goes against other explicit texts. If a ruler says to a blacksmith: "You have better knowledge of molding weapon", does it imply that he has absolute freedom of manufacturing and using the weapon? Does it mean that he does not even need a license and is free to make whatever he wants and for whomever he wants? Every sane person will understand that the intention of the ruler is not to give him total autonomy but to just state a fact.

Similarly, if a king says to his treasurer: "You have better knowledge about the treasure" (which treasurers usually have as the king himself does not keep all the records), does it imply that he is free to do anything with the treasure? Can he spend it in whatever way he wants? Never! The treasurer has no right to dispose it of despite having better knowledge about the treasure. He cannot give a dime without the king's permission.

In the same manner, even if we know our worldly affairs – like farming, gardening, weaving clothes etc. – better than the Prophets of Allah, it does not mean that we have total autonomy in these affairs. Rather, we are only allowed to do what they permit us to do, and we are bound to refrain from whatever they tell us to refrain.

In other words, the only message conveyed by this hadith is that, mostly, common people are more experienced

in day-to-day businesses and are more aware of the effects of different methods. The inference that they are autonomous in these affairs is a separate claim that has no mention in the hadith. What relation does knowledge have with autonomy and freedom of choice?

In short, the knowledge about something does not – in any way – establish freedom of choice. And how can it be when there are plenty of textual evidences that prove otherwise; there are verses in the Holy Quran that restrict the freedom of choice and freewill. For example:

> "Your Lord creates and chooses whatever He wills—the choice is not theirs. Glorified and Exalted is Allah above what they associate ˹with Him˺!" [Al-Qaṣaṣ: 68]

This verse conveys that just as Allah has no partner in his attribute of being The Creator, he has no partner in his attributes of Sovereignty and Autonomy as well. Thus, the creation as well as autonomy are reserved for Him alone. The Quranic statement 'the choice is not theirs' is totally negating the freedom of choice and autonomy of mankind. Then, 'Glorified and Exalted' denies the existence of any partner of Him – in creation as well as in lawmaking – which further affirms the autonomy and sovereignty being the exclusive rights of Allah.

Another verse describes the same with more lucidity:

> "The creation and the command belong to Him ˹alone˺. Blessed is Allah—Lord of all worlds!" [Al-A'rāf: 54]

Here, the 'creation' and 'command' – i.e., the attributes of being The Creator and being The Lawmaker –

have been declared an unshared property of The Almighty, which automatically proves inexistence of autonomy and free choice for others.

The third verse on the same topic is:

> "It is not for a believing man or woman—when Allah and His Messenger decree a matter—to have any other choice in that matter. Indeed, whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has clearly gone ˹far˺ astray." [Al-Aḥzāb: 36]

This verse explicitly states that Muslims are left with no choice or freewill once Allah or His Messenger decreed a matter (and is there any aspect of human life about which Allah or His Messenger have not decreed anything?). Instead, they become bound to follow their commands.

These textual references from the Noble Quran make it clear that calling something lawful or unlawful, permissible or impermissible is the right of Allah alone. We humans have no choice in this regard. The only choices we have are to carry out the commands of Allah and His Messenger, and not to decide the status of their instructions.

This is why the Quran proclaimed this principle:

> "Do not falsely declare with your tongues, "This is lawful, and that is unlawful," ˹only˺ fabricating lies against Allah. Indeed, those who fabricate lies against Allah will never succeed." [An-Naḥl: 116]

So, no man has the right to declare something permissible or impermissible without the guidance of Shariah as it will be tantamount to modifying the religion of Allah.

And this modification is strictly prohibited in the rules governing customs and habits just as it is prohibited in matters related to worships. No Human being has been given autonomy even in cultural and social affairs, because the rules of Shariah apply to his social life just as they do to his religious life.

Now, those who are trying to deduce absolute autonomy in customary and habitual things from the hadith "You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs" – although it proves nothing but having more knowledge – they must reflect on what they are doing; because this hadith does not establish their desired autonomy but there are other textual evidences that prove the opposite, i.e., the obedience and absolute compliance.

Basically, what these people are doing is that they are denying those textual references from the Quran and they are claiming something that is not mentioned in any text. Therefore, they are – in effect – doing addition in some texts and subtraction in others and, at the same time, they are also creating inconsistencies between texts. It needs no mention that any addition or subtraction in Quranic text, or creating inconsistencies in between, imply distortion and alteration in the words of Allah. "Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies." [An-Nisā: 82]

This is why these dissenters who dare to falsely declare "This is lawful, and that is unlawful" have been referred to as 'fabricators of lies against Allah', for they do not hesitate to call non-Quran as Quran, and Quran as non-Quran. They even claim that our worldly affairs are either lawful or unlawful on their own, or it is we – and not Shariah

– that make them lawful or unlawful. It was this mindset that made them claim: “Viewing the matter of clothing through the rigid lenses of ḥalāl and ḥarām is a big mistake.” (Because they view it through the lenses of their personal preferences instead of the verdicts of Shariah).

Surprisingly, even disbelievers and idolaters – who were habitual of altering the religious teachings, forbidding the lawful and allowing the unlawful – did not claim such freedom and autonomy for themselves (which these so called Muslims are trying hard to prove for themselves), because they would at least say after tampering with their religion: “Allah has commanded us to do it.” So, even those ignorant idolaters believed that nothing in this world can be lawful or unlawful without a decree from Allah, but alas, these so called enlightened Muslims do not have as little faith in Allah and his authority as those idolaters had. “And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others with Him.” [Yūsuf: 106]

All in all, the permissibility or impermissibility of any matter depends on the decree of Allah. Nothing can be declared as lawful or unlawful unless Allah has declared it so. All of our worldly affairs can be categorized either as permitted or forbidden and, obviously, the permission or forbiddance is decided by Allah, and religions merely disclose this decision.

Moving further, the hadith “Religion is very easy” comprises two parts: The subject, i.e., ‘religion’, and the predicate, i.e., ‘easy’. Both of these words – individually as well as post forming the sentence – are negating the autonomy and self-adulation, and affirming the compliance and obedience. The reason is that the word ‘religion’ here

refers to the rules of religion, as religion sans rules will be nothing. Therefore, the actual meaning of the hadith is: 'the rules of religion are easy'. The word 'rules' indicates that Allah is the ruler and lawgiver while humans are his subjects. And being subject implies nothing but obedience and compliance. Hence, the first part of the hadith – i.e., the religion – directs the authority and rulership to Allah and the servitude and subjection to us, human beings. Clearly, it deprives us of autonomy rather than granting it to us.

The second part of the hadith – i.e., easy – signifies ease and effortlessness, and since this ease pertains to religious practices, it can only be manifested through actions. The reason is that effortlessness is a feature of religious practices which can only materialize upon performing some actions; It is not an abstract concept that could be proved through logical reasoning. Therefore, the emergence of ease depends on complying with religious practices. So, it can be said that ease depends on compliance, rather compliance must precede it in order to manifest the effortlessness and ease of this compliance. Now, extrapolating this word 'easy' to autonomy and non-compliance is a grave mistake as well as deprivation of the ease rendered by Shariah, because the claim of ease with non-compliance to religious practices is in vain. Hence, the word 'easy' in the hadith does not suggest freedom and autonomy either. Instead, it implies compliance and servitude.

Then, the message of the whole sentence of the hadith 'religion is easy' is to encourage Muslims on complying with Shariah and to discourage non-compliance by revealing the easy nature of the religion. It also implies that the adherents of Shariah cannot live an unrestricted and uncontrolled life.

If Indians – for example – believe that Indian laws are easy, it does not mean that every citizen is free to do whatever he wants, he is not bound to any legal duties, or he can regard anything legal or illegal as per his wish. So how can Muslims be allowed to declare anything lawful or unlawful as per their wishes. Therefore, the claim that 'we are autonomous in our worldly affairs and the Shariah has nothing to do with clothing and other cultural things' is an absurd claim.

In conclusion, inferring autonomy from the hadith 'You have better knowledge about your worldly affairs' is a ridiculous inference and amounts to fabricating lies against Allah. We seek refuge in Allah from committing such grave sins.

Now the question that needs an answer is: what is the actual meaning of this hadith and why the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) pronounced that others have better knowledge of worldly affairs than him if it is not to give them freedom and autonomy?

The brief answer is that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) had prevented his Companions from artificially pollinating palm trees assuming it a form of superstition. But when abandoning this practice caused a decline in the yield, he realized that his assumption was wrong and the increase in the produce as a result of pollination is a natural phenomenon. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) allowed artificial pollination and explained to his companions that they were more knowledgeable in the worldly matters.

This incident proves few things:

1- In spite of the fact that common people are more aware of worldly matters, the Shariah status of

their practice as being lawful or unlawful was decided by the Prophet (PBUH) himself. He did not extend this authority to the Companions. It shows that having more knowledge of worldly affairs does not necessarily mean having religious knowledge too, and that the knowledge of lawfulness and unlawfulness fall under religious knowledge as against worldly knowledge.

2- It also shows that worldly affairs are essentially lawful unless they have a conflict with the religion. If they seem to have a conflict, the worldly affairs will become unlawful.
3- The conflict between worldly matters and religious law may not be understood by those who have knowledge of worldly affairs. This understanding is accorded to those who have knowledge of religion and its laws. Therefore, the people of the world are not autonomous in their worldly matters but bound to obey the religious scholars.

Question: One may have a question here that why this expression – ‘you have better knowledge of worldly affairs’ – was used in this hadith. This idea could have been expressed in a different way which would have been more appropriate according to the context. For instance, the Prophet (PBUH) could have said: ‘Since artificial pollination is a natural process to increase the produce, this practice is allowed.’ Or: ‘You may pollinate but do not consider it an omen.’ What was actually the purpose of explaining that other people are more knowledgeable of worldly matters than the Prophet himself.

Answer: Looking at his lack of knowledge in worldly matter, someone may doubt his prophethood

thinking that he does not even know this simple thing. So, the Prophet's answer – 'you have better knowledge of worldly affairs' – made it clear that the lack of knowledge about some worldly affairs is not a shortcoming on part of the prophet, because prophets are sent to perfect the religion and not to perfect the worldly life.

If the Prophet (PBUH) is unaware of things like gardening, grafting, weaving, and tailoring, it is not a matter of shame for him rather a matter of pride. A prophet is an expert in guiding to the path of Allah, not in these petty things. This is why the Holy Quran announced that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) does not know poetry and, for the same reason, the Prophet (PBUH) dissociated himself from Astrology and soothsaying. Therefore, if an ordinary man has expertise in these fields while the prophet is totally unaware of them, it will not be considered a blemish or imperfection rather a merit and excellence on his part. For this purpose, the Prophet (PBUH) wanted to clarify that he is not familiar with gardening unlike others, but the authority to decide whether it is lawful or not rests with him, so that no one could misinterpret it as his autonomy and self-sufficiency. And Allah knows best

As for attempts to renounce the clothing restrictions imposed by Shariah arguing that the religion is easy, and seeking validation from this hadith for every action intended for comfort-seeking and pleasure-loving, such attempts are even more lame and implausible. This hadith does, indeed, prove ease and effortlessness, but it does not even hint at unrestricted freedom to fulfill one's desires. Ease can never mean unlimited and absolute freedom. When thick volumes of Indian constitution, for example, cannot be burned down

despite having seized the absolute freedom of its citizen, how can anyone imply that easy nature of Islamic Shariah gives them the right to modify Shariah laws at their whim? People refrain from breaching the law of the land due to fear of prosecution or realizing the advantages of legal restrictions. They understand that obeying a body of law is their collective need to lead a peaceful life. Then why these same individuals do not want to obey the religious laws and Shariah regulations under the fear of God or realizing its advantages, in order to better their lives in this world as well as the hereafter.

As a matter of fact, the definition of religious ease in the eyes of Shariah – and even according to common sense – is not to give people unrestricted right to fulfill their desires, to grant them absolute animal-like freedom from religion and intellect, or to let them impose their own made-up restrictions upon themselves until they turn into hermits. On the contrary, the real ease is about making them obedient to the guiding commands sent down by God in lieu of their own desires, since God knows what is good for them and what is bad more than their own-selves and he is more kind and merciful than their own parents.

It is not kind and humane to let an innocent child do whatever he wants, as he will certainly invite countless sufferings and harms on himself. But the actual kindness and ease for him is that he should be made to follow the instructions of his mentors, no matter how much he cries and protests against this restriction and how much he calls it an unease.

The same holds true about a human being, as no matter how old he becomes and how much experience he

acquires, he does not know what is good for him and what is bad more than Allah the All-knowing. His knowledge about himself in so meagre in front of Allah that even a child's knowledge in front of his mentors is not that insignificant. Therefore, the prosperity and comfort of a human being lies in abiding by Divine instructions as against leading an unrestricted life, no matter how much he cries, screams, or complains that 'this aspect of life is beyond the scope of Shariah' or 'I am free to choose my clothing', or 'imposing restrictions is against the hadith that religion is easy'. If he does that, then the only appropriate response to him will be: 'This very restriction is the ultimate freedom' and 'this trouble is the prelude to ease'.

At last, the hadith from which autonomy and self-rule were inferred, the same hadith turned out to be the advocate of restrictions and compliance and became an evidence to support our claim against theirs.

Now, I will pose a question to those who are into the science of hadith: Do the collections of hadith that contain 'the religion is easy' not contain other traditions proclaiming Shariah restrictions? Indeed, those restrictions are not against the easy nature of the religion, or else there will be a contradiction among traditions of the Prophet. However, if one contemplates the actual meaning of 'the religion is easy', it will become clear that these Shariah restrictions are the key to all kinds of ease and prosperity. On the other side, obeying one's own desires – which appears easy on the surface – is in fact the root cause of all kinds of problems and difficulties.

Thus, the hadith on which the seekers of unrestricted freedom based their case turned out to be against them, and the restrictions which they were viewing as difficulty have been

proved – by the same hadith – to be ease and prosperity. In place of individual freedom and autonomy, the hadith established the significance of compliance and adherence to Shariah law. Additionally, it also came to light that the supporters of unrestricted liberty could only grasp the literal meaning of the words used in the hadith and failed to reach the crux of the matter. This is why they erred in interpreting the hadith, despite the fact that the essence of the hadith is as reliable as its literal meaning based on the Prophet's saying: "Every verse in it has an external and an internal meaning".

This superficial understanding also led these individuals to misuse the juristic maxim that the clothing is among '*sunan al-zawā'id*'. They tried to prove that based on this maxim, we have the right to choose any style of clothing and this right is acknowledged by Muslim jurists. However, they again failed to grasp – or they have deliberately ignored – the true sense of this maxim and went with the literal meaning instead. If being one of the '*sunan al-zawā'id*' signifies that clothing has nothing to do with religion and the Islamic Shariah has not provided any guidance in this regard, then what would you say about all the rules and regulations of Shariah concerning the clothing and attire that we have set forth in this book? Is this not a false accusation against scholars and jurists who are the same people who have described these rules and regulations of Shariah?

If '*sunan al-zawā'id*' are things that have no relation with the religion and the Shariah has regarded them as useless and unnecessary things, then all the '*sunan*' except *'sunan al-hudā'* and *'al-sunan al-mua'kkadah'* – regardless of whether they are related to habits or worships – should be unrelated to Shariah, whereas applying the word '*sunan*' to clothing is a proof in itself that clothing is part of religion.

As for the reason of calling it '*sunan al-zawā'id*', it is not because the matter of clothing is not part of the religion, but to make it clear that clothing is not pious or virtuous by itself; Wearing clothes is not a pious act in itself like prayers and fasting, rather it becomes pious when it complies with the rules and regulations of Shariah. Therefore, the clothing is a customary thing in itself, but it becomes a form of worship due to other factors. Thus, the term '*sunan al-zawā'id*' has been used to rule out its status as a virtuous deed, and not to exclude it from the constituents of religion.

In brief, the Shariah has provided sufficient and detailed guidelines with respect to each and every aspect of the issue of clothing, some of which we have discussed in the previous sections of this book.

After these detailed instructions, any attempts to draw wrong conclusions from the explicit texts of hadith or statements of jurists will not affect the rules of Shariah. Especially when the jurists of this ummah have inferred general principles from individual rules mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah, and then they identified the effective causes of those laws followed by deriving the rules of new issues from the general principles, and by virtue of this process of induction and deduction, they managed to put forward a Shariah code so perfect that we never needed to formulate a new law or to even amend it until today.

Having said that, in order to fully comprehend this law, one needs to possess a certain degree of knowledge and intellect. Not every Tom, Dick, and Harry can be relied upon in terms of interpreting a text, resolving a legal complication, or passing his judgement in the matters of Shariah law. Evidently, there are experts in every field and it is only their

opinions that matter. Only a jeweler is qualified to identify genuine diamonds from fake ones; Judges and lawyers have no say regarding medical problems; Experts from one field – no matter how much qualified they are – have no right to express their views about other fields. And if they do, their views will have zero value.

Likewise, only religious learned scholars are reliable to understand the intents of Quran and Sunnah, only they are qualified to apply the rules of Shariah to modern issues, and only their verdicts can set a legal precedent for subsequent instances. These self-named intellectuals, who neither possess a religious temperament nor do they have a thorough understanding of Islam, have no right to decide the intent of the hadith "You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs" or "The religion is easy" based on their liberal mindset, and not only to decide the intent but also to oppose anyone who differs.

There is no denying that the matter of clothing is purely a religious affair. The Shariah has expounded not only its principles but also an overall set of instructions concerning this issue. It has distinguished pious garb from the wicked one, and the lawful fashion from the unlawful one. Hence, there is no room left for interference by corrupt minds in the matter of clothing.

Now, the summary of the entire discussion is that the main objective of clothing is to refine the intrinsic qualities (*akhlāq*), and this objective can be realized through reforming the outward garb. Then, there are two ways to reform the outward garb: First, by imitating the garb of pious men. Second, by not imitating the garb of wicked individuals. And since avoiding the imitation of the wicked is more important – both logically and Islamically – than imitating the pious, Muslims

are first required to refrain from imitating non-Muslims. So, refraining from the imitation of non-Muslims is the first step towards purifying our appearance and attaining the goodness of clothing, and all these details concerning the issue of attire are – in a way – a prelude to the issue of imitation, or – to be precise – to its negative facet (i.e., not imitating the non-Muslims). I hope – by the Will of God – that I have been successful in explaining the subject matter in a comprehensible and lucid manner.

At the end, I sincerely apologize for any sharp words or bitter tone used unintentionally in this treatise, and I earnestly request my brothers in Islam who have fallen in the sin of imitation – on their own impulse or due to peer pressure – to please stick to the garb of our predecessors which is a part of our national and religious identity, and not to lose the crucial qualities of self-respect and self-reliance in this era of globalization; and they must regard it as their religious duty. If they cannot fully conform to the pious and righteous attire, then they must at least cleanse their dresses of the viruses of immorality and ostentation that have creeped in through imitation of, and mingling with, other nations. Indeed, the noble characteristics of self-reliance, autonomy, and compliance to the path of the predecessors are the distinguishing features of this nation and are inducive to the prosperity of both worlds.

I assert – with full conviction – that there are many people in India and other Muslim countries who cling to their traditional Muslim attire and it stops them from countless immoralities and sins. Their pious appearance forces them to stay away from wicked behavior, indecent activities, and unholy gatherings. Is it not an observable fact that a lot of

traditionally dressed Muslims abstain from theft, gambling, drinking, adultery, vulgarity, abusing, cursing, and innumerable other open sins just because their Islamic appearance and pious clothing stop them from indulging in these unethical and embarrassing practices? Just as the impious appearance of many improperly clothed individuals encourages them to embrace immoral lifestyle, indecent company, and unethical practices.

Thus, since Islamic appearance is effective in keeping away from un-Islamic and immoral practices (as proved by our observation), even if this appearance initially comes from ostentatious sentiments, I do not see a requirement to present any other evidence on the importance of embracing the Islamic appearance and abandoning the imitation of non-Muslims.

Section Two: The Hadith 'Whoever Imitates a People is One of Them': Some Doubts and their Clarification

At this stage, the issue of imitation has been elucidated from all dimensions and – praise be to God – the concept, application, and Shariah significance of this matter have also come to light. However, we are yet to respond to doubts and objections pertaining to this subject that have been raised – and are still raised – by individuals with superficial understanding with an aim to belittle this matter. In this section, I will deal with those objections so that the matter of imitation becomes crystal clear and the path of practice gets unclouded for the seekers of guidance.

The doubts and objections related to this topic are of different types; Some affect its theoretical aspect and some

affect its practical aspect. That is to say, some objections are aimed at dismissing the concept altogether while others are aimed at declaring it impractical. Further, the objections attacking the theoretical aspect are also classified in two types: Firstly, the ones that ride on the Shariah itself for dismissing and denying the idea of imitation. In other words, they use the approach of allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) to reject the concept in order to avoid the tag of the deniers. Secondly, the objections of those who did not even bother this much and dared to openly challenge the Shariah by categorically rejecting the idea of imitation on the basis of their imaginations and personal opinions.

In the following, I will first analyze and then critically examine the arguments of both groups one by one. Thereafter, I will uncover the truth of the subject matter which some willfully ignorant individuals – owing to their fallacious perception – have brought to this stage that this well-established and plain fact has turned into a debatable and controversial issue.

Objections and their Answers

The former group of objectors – i.e., those who have adopted the approach of allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) – proclaim in their public lectures, political speeches, and published literature that the concept of imitation is totally illogical and impractical. And since this concept is based on the hadith 'Whoever imitates a people is one of them",[140] they have exerted all their forces in criticizing and weakening this hadith.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of Aligarh University, whose foremost ambition seems to be uprooting

(140) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwū*d, Hadith no. 1431.

the importance of Islamic symbols and traditional practices from Muslim minds, is the leader of this group. He has wasted plenty of pages from his academic journal "Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq" trying to prove that this hadith is unsound and unreliable, and fulminating against the prohibition of imitating non-Muslims. He raised total six objections against the above cited hadith, one out of which is related to its narration and reliability of the chain of its narrators (*riwāyat al-ḥadīth*) and the rest are concerned with its comprehension and interpretation (*dirāyat al-ḥadīth*).

About the objections on its narration part, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan writes in Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq (vol.4, page 40, 1290 A.H):

> The first thing I would like to clarify is that this hadith is not proven, neither as per the rules of riwāyat nor dirāyat. As for riwāyat, so because the chain of its transmitters is not proven to be continuous to the Messenger of Allah, since the words used in this narration do not rule out a missing narrator between Ḥassān and Abū Manīb. Thus, when the chain of narrators is not intact, the hadith cannot be regarded as authentic.

This vague objection does not require any detailed answer as it has already been well countered by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book "Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm". But before that, I quote the hadith along with the names of its narrators.

> Narrated Uthmān ibn Abī Shaybah from Abū al-Naṣr Hāshim bin al-Qāsim, from

> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Thābit, from Ḥssān bin ‘Aṭiyyah, from Abū Manīb al-Jurashi, from Ibn ‘Umar: The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Whoever imitates a people is one of them.’[141]

Ibn Taymiyyah commented the following about these narrators:

> The chain of this narration is sound, because Ibn Abī Shaybah, Abū al-Naṣr, and Ḥassān bin ‘Aṭiyyah are among the reliable and esteemed narrators of the Ṣaḥīḥayn (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim). In fact, their status is so elevated that they do not even need to be referred as ‘the narrators of the Ṣaḥīḥayn’.
>
> About ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Thābit, the experts of biographical evaluation like Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn, Abū Zur‘ah, and Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh said: “He is okay.”
>
> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ibrāhīm observed: “He is reliable.”
>
> Abū Ḥatim remarked: “His narrations are sound.”
>
> As for Abū Manīb al-Jurashi, Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Ajalī said about him: “He is reliable and I do not know anyone who criticized him.” [142]

(141) Ibid, Hadith no. 4031.
(142) Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, 1:269.

These comments of Ibn Taymiyyah are enough to demolish the vague doubts of Syed Ahmad Khan concerning the weakness of narrators.

He claimed: 'The words used in this narration do not rule out a missing narrator between Ḥassān and Abū Manīb.' However, the first thing is that criticizing the chain of narrators on the basis of the words of hadith is a strange method unknown even to the experts of this science. And secondly, it is also not clear why the words of this narration 'do not rule out a missing narrator'.

Thus, the claim of broken chain and a missing narrator between Ḥassān and Abū Manīb is too obscure, let alone being supported by evidences. Therefore, we are not bound to answer, yet as a courtesy, I quote Ibn Taymiyyah's words which will be sufficient to clarify the doubt. He stated:

> "Ḥassān bin 'Aṭiyyah did indeed hear from Abū Manīb, and Imām Aḥmad and other scholars of hadith have regarded this hadith as authentic."[143]

The arguments of Syed Ahmad Khan are left with zero value after this statement of Ibn Taymiyyah and the endorsement of its authenticity by Imām Aḥmad.

Furthermore, this is not the only chain of transmission for this hadith. Al-Ṭabrānī in his *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr* and *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ* reported the same hadith from 'Abd Allāh ibn al-'Umar; Al-Bazzār reported it in his *Al-Musnad* from Ḥudhayfah ibn Al-Yamān and Abū Ḥurayrah; Abū Nu'aym reported it as the statement of the

(143) Ibid, 1:270.

Prophet through Anas bin Mālik in his *Tārīkh al-Aṣbahān*; and Al-Qaḍā'ī reported it as the statement of Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān. According to Ibn Qayyim, Ḥākim has recorded this hadith from Ibn 'Umar.(144)

So, even if one chain is accepted to be weak, it will be compensated by abundance of other chains as per the principles of the science of hadith. Hence, no one should have the audacity to belittle a hadith and impair a Prophetic command just because it goes against his personal opinion. We seek refuge in Allah from such grave sin.

Objections Related to Comprehension of the Hadith

First objection: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan writes in Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq:

> "The narrator did not mention the context of this hadith and, due to uncertainty of its context, no injunction can be inferred from the word 'imitation' – neither through induction or deduction nor through logical reasoning."

Answer: First of all, the claim that 'the context of the hadith is unknown' is completely wrong. When the Companions of the Prophet have applied this hadith in numerous religious and secular affairs (as we have already mentioned in the previous sections, and will do more in the upcoming part), how can anyone claim that the context is uncertain? The situations to which this hadith has been applied by the Companions, at least those situations are definitely the context of the hadith. And even if – let's

(144) Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzyyah, *Zād al-Ma'ād fī Hudā Khayr al-'Ibād* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1994), 1:137.

assume – the context was uncertain, still it does not make any difference as the wording of the hadith is very explicit, unambiguous, and expressive of its meaning. Therefore, the real objective of the hadith can easily be determined through its literal meaning in the light of general principles of Shariah.

Furthermore, it is an accepted principle in the science of Islamic Jurisprudence that even a specific context does not confine the meaning of text to that context, as one should go by the general sense of the text rather than simply the specific meaning suggested by the context. Hence, this question itself is illogical.

Second objection: Syed Ahmad Khan further states:

> "Secondly, the word 'a people' used in the hadith is also meaningless. Being a member of a particular community or imitating a particular community does not affect any Shariah ruling. What Shariah consequence does it have if an Indian Muslim imitated the appearance of Arabs, Iranians, Pashtuns, Russians, or the English and other people also considered him as one of them?"

Answer: There is not one but many Shariah consequences of imitation:

1- **Erasing the distinctions:** The first catastrophic consequence of imitation is that it erases the visible distinctions between Muslims and non-Muslims, whereas Islam aspires to maintain these distinctions as opposed to similarities and confusion. This objective of Islam has already been highlighted through Quranic verses, Prophetic traditions, and

sayings of his Companions. It goes without saying that imitating other nations obliterate these distinctions.

2- **Strengthening the argument of disbelievers:** Once mutual distinctions are replaced by outward similarities, these similarities will provide disbelievers with an argument against you. This will set a precedent for them to desire for uniformity in other aspects of life, whereas Islam strives to abolish every argument of disbelievers and every ground of possible uniformity between Muslims and non-Muslims, as appears from the change of *qiblah* (prayer direction) which was aimed at eliminating the seeming unity in terms of facing the same direction during worships; "So that people may have no argument against you." [Al-Baqarah: 150]

3- **Belittling the Shariah:** The imitation of disbelievers leads to belittling and trivializing the commands of Shariah pertaining to simplicity of clothing as well as their spiritual benefits (which we will discuss soon in the upcoming section), which amounts to contempt of Shariah. Disrespecting the Islamic garb is a particular trait of imitators which is first manifested in their actions and then their beliefs. It is an observable fact that the imitators of the West and those who are fond of European culture never look at Islamic appearance or Islamic customs with respect; rather they always look down on Islamic cultural values. And any disrespectful behavior towards Islam renders a Muslim hypocrite (*munāfiq*).

4- **Inclining to unbelievers:** The urge to imitate unbelievers never arises without a heartfelt

inclination towards them, which is also detested in Islam: "And do not be inclined to the wrongdoers or you will be touched by the Fire." [Hūd: 113] So, can a sentiment that originates from an unlawful tendency be considered lawful?

5- **Undermining the efforts of predecessors:** The imitation of unbelievers also leads to undermining the efforts of our predecessors in preventing Muslims from the imitation of non-Muslims, especially when it comes to clothing. All their attempts to curb this decease appear meaningless to imitators; 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's stern reaction to the slave girl who was wearing the garb of free women and his order to remove this garb become worthless; 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz's command to the people of Banū Taghlib to take off the garb of Arabs and tearing it to make them look different from Muslims become pointless; Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf's decree for scholars and jurists of his time to sport distinct attire to be distinguishable from the masses becomes futile; The statement of one of the teachers of Imām Abū Dāwūd about the ruler of his time upon seeing him wearing fine clothing: "Our ruler is wearing the clothing of the sinners" becomes senseless; And the strict attitude of the pious men of this ummah towards anything that gives rise to imitation seems in vain. It is in spite of the fact that the continuous practice of our predecessors holds the status of authority to the extent that Imām Mālik gave priority to the common practice of the residents of Medina in the event of conflict arising among the Prophetic traditions.

6- **Wrong testimony:** When a Muslims adopts the semblance of unbelievers, anyone looking at him will assume that he is not a Muslim or he does not have any respect for Islamic appearance, which is a sign of hypocrisy. And Muslims assuming someone a disbeliever or hypocrite, or Muslims testifying disbelief or hypocrisy of someone, does indeed have consequences in the sight of Allah. "You are Allah's witnesses in the earth."[145]

7- **Non-Islamic treatment:** When imitator would be considered a member of non-Muslim community, will Muslims treat him like a member of their own community? For instance, if he dies somewhere, will Muslims pray at his funeral? Will they bury him in Muslim graveyard? Will they perform Islamic funeral rituals and shroud him in the Islamic manner? Never! And what a huge loss it will be.

Therefore, even if it is accepted that imitation is confined to clothing – as claimed by Sir Syed – will this imitation not have any Shariah consequences? does erasing the distinctions, strengthening the argument of disbelievers, belittling the Islamic appearance, inclining to unbelievers, undermining the efforts of predecessors, wrong testimony by Muslims, and being treated like a non-Muslims have nothing to do with Shariah? Has Islam not dealt with these issues? And when it is this imitation that yields all these bad outcomes, is it sensible to say that imitation does not have any Shariah consequences? Undoubtedly, all the consequences described above are indeed Shariah consequences that emerged from imitation of disbelievers.

(145) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Hadith no. 949.

Thus, the imitation is unlawful in itself and unlawful due to its negative outcomes.

Third objection: Syed Ahmad Khan writes in Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq what can be summarized as:

> The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) wore a Roman jubbah with narrow sleeves which was the attire of Christians, a Shāmī jubbah which was the attire of Jews, and a Ṭayālisī jubbah which was the attire of Zoroastrians. If imitation was forbidden, how come the Prophet of Allah wore these clothes? Moreover, it is stated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri, the book of dress: Chapter: "Say: Who has forbidden the adornment with clothes given by Allah which He has produced for His slaves?" The Prophet said: "Eat, drink, and wear clothes (i.e., of your choice)." So this verse of the Holy Quran and these traditions of the Prophet are conflicting with the concept of imitation.

Answer: After exerting himself to search for evidences, Khan could not find anything except the example of these three types of jubbah. But the question is: even if we admit that these instances are contradicting the general law, is it logical to abandon the general law due to these individual instances? Or should we uphold the general law by finding a proper justification for the individual instances, thereby retaining both the general law and individual cases at their suitable places?

For us, the second approach is more logical and more in line with the objectives of Shariah, because general laws

are based on common applicability, principle causes, and universal rules, whereas individual instances lack this universality and general applicability. Therefore, it is sensible to give priority to general laws over individual instances.

Thus, we can say about these three instances without any hesitation that these are specific incidents with no general applicability. That is to say, these cases do not contain any common basis or universal rules that could be effective in nullifying the general law of imitation.

Moreover, the use of these three attires does not result in the validity of imitation, because imitation means unification of two things in such a way that neither could retain its independent existence. Apparently, this kind of unification between two humans only occurs when one of them embraces distinct features and distinguishing qualities of the other and becomes exactly like him. That said, there is no indication that the Roman jubbah was a distinct feature of Christians, Shāmī jubbah was specific for Jews, and Ṭayālisī jubbah was a symbol of Zoroastrians. So, how can it form a basis of argument against imitation?

In fact, the attribution of jubbahs to Rome, Shām, and Ṭayālisah does not even mean that these jubbahs were used by those nations let alone being a symbol of them. It is because a product is sometimes attributed to its manufacturer or producer and it becomes popular by their names, like Dawson shoes and Pears soap. So, when we say: 'Indians use Dawson shoes and Pears soap', it does not imply that the producers of Dawson and Pears use these products let alone being a symbol of them. The only meaning that this statement conveys is that these shoes and this soap were manufactured by Dawson and Pears and are being used by Indians.

Similarly, a product is sometimes attributed to the place of its production or to a specific city or country whose name it carries, such as Italian clothes and Banarasi fabrics. Italian clothes are produced in Italy and Banarasi fabric is woven in Banaras city, so they got famous by the names of these places. Thus, if someone uses Italian or Banarasi clothes, will it imply that these clothes are distinctive signs of the residents of Italy and Banaras and this person is imitating them by using these clothes? No! It does not even convey that these products are used at those places, let alone being their distinctive signs. Rather, it is quite possible that these clothes are only exported to other countries, as is the case with mostly red and bright colored dresses that are produced in Europe and exported to Asia, while Europeans rarely use them. Hence, clothes are attributed to and get famous by the names of their producers or the places of their production, it has virtually nothing to do with imitation.

In the same way, how does the hadith about the Prophet (PBUH) using Roman, Shāmī, and Ṭayālisī jubbahs convey that these jubbahs were distinctive symbols and specific attires of those nations? And the Prophet (PBUH) demonstrated the permissibility of imitation by wearing them? In fact, these attributions do not even imply that these attires are used at those places, much less being their symbols. The only thing that these attributions mean is that these jubbahs originated from those countries, or they were produced there, or they were sold there and exported to other countries, and the Prophet (PBUH) happened to use a foreign made outfit.

This is same as what reported in another hadith that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used Yamani shawl. Does it entail that this shawl was a symbol of Yamanis and the

Messenger (PBUH) was imitating them? Or, as reported in another hadith, the Messenger (PBUH) used a Coptic shawl (a cotton shawl produced and worn by Copts). Does it mean he was – God forbid – imitating the Copts? Never! this attribution to Copts does not even convey their usage, much less being their symbol and opening the door for imitation.

In short, denying the concept of imitation on the basis of these ambiguous attributions is an irrational and baseless approach which is not expected from someone who has even an iota of knowledge and rationality.

As a matter of fact, when individual instances appear to be contradicting a general law and a verbal command of the Prophet (PBUH), and the individual instances are devoid of a visible cause, then the general law which has evident basis is not amended to accommodate those instances. Instead, those instances are interpreted in such a way that they become compatible with the general law even if the literal meaning suggests otherwise.

It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that ‘Abd Allāh bin ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ reported: “Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saw me wearing two clothes dyed in saffron. whereupon he said: These are the clothes of the non-believers, so do not wear them.”

The Prophet (PBUH) did not only forbid the clothes dyed in saffron red, but he also forbade red colored clothes in general, as reported in other traditions. However, at one occasion, his own practice was contradictory to this verbal command of general prohibition. An excerpt from a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim reads: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) stepped out with a red mantle on him.”(146)

(146) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Hadith no. 503.

Ibn Qayyim has explained in Zād al-Ma‘ād that the Prophet (PBUH) explicitly forbade wearing red clothes, so there is no way he will wear it himself. Therefore, the meaning of the above hadith is that his mantle had red stripes and was not purely red, because it was a Yamani shawl and Yamani shawls generally have red and black stripes. But the phrase ‘red mantle’ made people think that it was pure red.(147)

In a nutshell, these individual instances and occasional occurrences are not capable to form the grounds for Syed Ahmad Khan’s argumentation against imitation. As for seeking support from the Quranic verse, “Say: Who has forbidden the adornment with clothes given by Allah which He has produced for His slaves?”, and Prophetic tradition, “Eat, drink, and wear clothes”, and from the commentary of Imām al-Bukhāri on this, “i.e., of your choice”, so this is even more bizarre.

Does the generality of these texts entail the permissibility of consuming pork and wine and wearing silk for men? If the answer is no because these things have been declared prohibited in other texts, then the same can be said about the matter of clothing as there are other textual evidences prohibiting any kind of adornment that carries resemblance with disbelievers. When other evidences that prohibit consuming pork, wine, meat of wild beasts, and many other edibles are accepted as restricting the general meaning of these texts, there is no reason that other evidences that prohibit silk, imitation of disbelievers, and extravagance in clothing should not be accepted as restricting the general meaning of these texts.

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(147) Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzyyah, *Zād al-Ma‘ād fī Hudā Khayr al-‘Ibād*, 1:134.

The truth is that the objectors have not contemplated the words of the above-mentioned hadith in the first place, neither did they try to understand its objective. The complete wording of the same hadith is: "Eat and drink, give charity and wear clothes, as long as that does not involve any extravagance or vanity."[(148)]

It implies that when eating, drinking, or wearing clothes crosses the limit of moderation and enters the scope of extravagance or vanity, it loses its lawfulness and becomes forbidden.

Thus, all the clothes that reflect profligacy and conceit; all the semblances that are characterized by self-admiration and indulgence; all the appearances that manifest arrogance in place of servitude and self-absorption in place of devotion to God; and all the foodstuffs that involve overspending and wastefulness have been rendered impermissible by this Quranic verse and Prophetic hadith. In fact, other Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions have explained all these details, and we have discussed the same in previous chapters of this book.

Therefore, the hadith which Sir Syed is quoting as his argument is, in fact, supporting our stance of prohibiting the imitation.

Further, to add to our surprise, Sir Syed concludes:

> These traditions do not seem to prohibit us from any kind of clothing. So, the word 'imitation' cannot refer to resemblance in clothing.[(149)]

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(148) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 3605.
(149) *Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq*, 1290 A.H, p41.

In a hadith of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Messenger of Allah informed: "The Dajjāl would be followed by seventy thousand Jews of Isfahan wearing Ṭayālisah (Persian shawls)."(150) And then the Companion of the Prophet (PBUH), Anas bin Mālik, saw a group of Muslim men wearing Ṭayālisah. So he expressed his disapproval and said: "What encouraged them to imitate the Jews of Khaybar?"(151)

It shows that Anas bin Mālik regarded the resemblance in clothing as the prohibited form of imitation, while Syed Ahmad Khan does not want to regard it as a form of imitation.

Ibn Qayyim commented on this incident:

> For this reason, the scholars of earlier generations and of our generation disliked wearing Persian shawls, because Abū Dāwūd in his al-Sunan and Al-Ḥākim in his Al-Mustadrak narrated from Ibn 'Umar: The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them", and Al-Tirmdhī recorded: "He is not one of us who resembles other than us.(152)

It demonstrates that the scholars of every generation have regarded the resemblance in clothing as a form of imitation. So, when the ummah has been unanimous – from the era of Companions to this day – that the hadith of imitation is applicable to clothing, we don't think the opinion of Syed Ahmad Khan holds any value against this consensus.

(150) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Hadith no. 2944.

(151) Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzyyah, *Zād al-Ma'ād fī Hudā Khayr al-'Ibād*, 1:137.

(152) Ibid.

However, if he wants to separate his way from the main body of the Muslims, he is free to do so.

Fourth objection: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan writes:

> "All Muslims including the Ṣaḥāba and the Prophet (PBUH) himself used to wear the same clothing as the non-Muslim Arabs did. Both communities, though different in religion, were exactly like each other in outward appearance. There was no visible difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. So, what is the meaning of the hadith "whoever imitates a people is one of them"? Is it not logical to believe that if the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was born in London, Germany, or Asia, he would have worn the same dresses as the people of these countries do? Then what is the Shariah consequence of imitating other nations?

Answer: This objection comprises four elements. The first element is incidental which Sir Syed's mind has turned into a principle and then inferred a general law from this principle, which is based on his perception. Then, an assumption has been made on the basis of that general law which is purely a product of his imagination. Thereafter, a rule has been derived from that assumption and a verdict has been announced which actually exposes his reasoning ability.

The first element of his objection is: "The Prophet (PBUH) and the disbelievers of Arab used to wear the same clothing." From this, he inferred a general rule that every prophet had to follow the customs and traditions of his people in terms of clothing and other social practices. Then,

he made an assumption, based on this general rule, that if Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born in London or Germany, his attire would have been similar to common attire of these countries, that is, pant, coat, hat etc. Then finally, he announced the verdict that Indian Muslims are allowed to wear the dresses of Christians. We shall deal with all four elements one by one.

Similarity in the clothing of Ṣaḥāba and disbelievers: First of all, we don't believe that the concept of imitation is relevant to ḥullah. A ḥullah – which comprises a shawl and a lower body covering – does not constitute a form or style of clothing, rather it is the basic clothing and the essential pieces of body covering. This is why in the state of iḥrām, when all sorts of adornments and stitched clothes become prohibited, only ḥullah is allowed to be worn as it consists of the minimum pieces of clothes that are required to cover the body.

Therefore, ḥullah is the basic clothing, while imitation pertains to forms and styles of clothing and not to the clothing per se. If the prohibitory rules of imitation are applied to ḥullah, it will imply the prohibition of the clothing itself and it will be like stopping one from eating, drinking, having nose and ear, worshipping, being human, and even from staying alive. Meanwhile, we have proved earlier that the rules of imitation do not apply to these things.

Further, even if we accept that ḥullah sometimes represents a style – for example when it becomes a symbol of a non-Muslim community, as was the case with idolaters of Mecca – still we do not accept that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed it without any conditions or restrictions and exactly in the same way as the idolaters used to wear; because the

idolaters used to hang their lower garment below the ankle and used to drag it out of arrogance, whereas the Prophet (PBUH) instructed: “The way for a believer to wear a lower garment is to have it halfway down his legs and he is guilty of no sin if it comes halfway between that and the ankles.”[153]

The idolaters of Mecca were accustomed to wearing lengthy garments that exceeded their feet, similar to the practice of kings and emperors. But the Prophet (PBUH) forbade this practice for himself as well as for his companions. Apparently, the motive behind this prohibition was to prevent the resemblance of disbelievers, because even if the Prophet (PBUH) had worn the ḥullah in exactly the same manner as idolaters did, it was impossible for his immaculate heart to absorb an iota of arrogance and vanity. Yet, he put some restrictions on the manner of wearing it which points at nothing but imitation. And if his motive was to set an example for Muslims, it again indicates that the main objective was to prevent his followers, inwardly, from arrogance and vanity and, outwardly, from imitation of disbelievers.

In short, the use of ḥullah by the Prophet (PBUH) while fulfilling the conditions of its lawfulness actually proves the impermissibility of imitation instead of its permissibility, contrary to Sir Syed’s claim.

Moreover, even if we admit that the Prophet (PBUH) wore the clothes of idolaters thereby resembling them in his appearance, then let me say that this resemblance was temporary; for a short period of time and, therefore,

(153) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwū*d, Hadith no. 4093.

insignificant. It is because the idolaters of Arabs had no choice of paying *jizyah* and becoming *dhimmīs*. They had to choose between accepting Islam and dying. So, since the land of Arabia was definitely going to be free from disbelievers and idolaters, the concept of imitation was also going to vanish soon. Thus, it was irrational to abandon ḥullah due to the fear of temporary resemblance.

In short, this element does not prove the legality of imitation in the first place. And If it proves that, then it does not imply the permissibility of imitating the disbelievers without any alteration or change in style or without observing any conditions or restrictions. If it does imply that, then it is inconsiderable for being a temporary phenomenon.

I wonder how can someone derive from this ambiguous notion the misconception that every prophet has to follow the customs and social practices of his people in terms of clothing? If one is adamant on this misconception, then I am sure such a person will be a laughing stock, for his reasoning is baseless, his inference is unfounded, and his conclusion is unjustified.

Even if we accept, for a moment, that the clothing of the Prophet (PBUH) and idolaters was same, still it does not prove that the intention of the Prophet (PBUH) was to imitate the idolaters so as one could misconceive that every prophet was bound to follow his local customs and practices. It is very much possible that this similarity in clothing was purely incidental and not intended to abide by local customs. And even if there was an intention of abiding by something, it was of abiding by the earlier Muslims as opposed to idolaters.

If these doubters had some sense left in them, they would have made out that the Prophet's (PBUH) use of ḥullah was not to comply with local practices, but to comply with the practice of his forefather, Prophet Ismā'īl (PBUH), for he was commanded to do so. After mentioning the names of many Prophets including Ismā'īl (PBUH), the Holy Quran commanded the Prophet Muhammad: "They are those whom Allah had guided. So follow their guidance." [Al-An'ām: 90]

Since the Holy Quran did not restrict this command with any particular practice or behavior, all those things from the religions of past prophets that have not been abrogated fall under the scope of this commandment. So all such practices are obligatory to follow, whether they are related to worships or customs, and whether they concern eating and drinking or clothing and semblance.

Further, according to 'Umar al-Fārūq, the attire of Prophet Ismā'īl (PBUH) was the same ḥullah, because he encouraged the Arabs of Azerbaijan on wearing ḥullah and called it the clothing of their father, Ismā'īl (PBUH). He said: "O people! Wear *izār* and *ridā*'. Wear sandals and throw away shoes and long trousers. Wear the clothing of your father, Ismā'īl."(154)

Thus, the intention of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) behind wearing ḥullah was to follow the path of the pious predecessors, and not to follow the custom of disbelievers and idolaters, as the objectors claim. Therefore, the very foundation on which the objectors had built their objections is destroyed, leaving the whole construction of doubt frail and shaky.

(154) 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Af'āl*, 15:472, no. 41870.

Now, these doubters have no option but to find some other basis for their doubts which we do not know so far.

Going one step further, we assert that their objection amounts to a gross disrespect to the Shariah of Allah and audacity to defy His orders; because it implies that prophets have no personal impulse, divine inspiration, or heavenly guidance to follow when it comes to clothing and other customary affairs. Rather, he is just like any other human being in this regard who is bound to adhere to the customs and traditions of his own time. And to add to the insult, they regard a prophet as an adherent of the same people for whose guidance he was sent. And why was he sent in the first place? Because those people had corrupted their belief system, their moral state, and their practices, and the corruption was so pervasive that nothing could have changed their situation except for prophets of Allah.

On top of that, this adherence of the corrupt people has also been attributed to the greatest Prophet of Allah who guided his people to every virtue that ensures the betterment of afterlife, who set noblest examples to follow in worldly affairs, and whose Shariah encompassed each and every aspect of morality, behavior, religious practices, social norms, and even clothing and outward appearance. The perfectness and inclusiveness of whose religion is the envy of his opponents. The guidance he brought is so comprehensive that it even teaches the manners of defecating and urinating. It is so flawless that even his enemies were forced to admit: "This man does not want to leave anything we do without opposing us in it."[155]

(155) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Hadith no. 302.

This statement reflects their frustration on the fact that no element of the religion he has brought is based on replication of other religions, but on divine revelation and heavenly guidance, "the night and day of which are same."[156]

Therefore, claiming that any prophet – specially the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – was lacking divine guidance in any department of life, be it clothing or any other department, and believing that he was a mere follower of the prevalent practices of his time, is such an audacious claim that every Muslim will readily detest it and the Shariah will categorically rebuff it.

The Quran is proclaiming that: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example." [Al-Aḥzāb: 21] And it is not even confining this excellent example into any particular department of human life, rather declaring the Messenger of Allah as the role model for every aspect of life, be it religion and worship or custom and habit.

Further, it goes to the extent of claiming that not only his practices, but also each and every word uttered by his blessed tongue constitutes ultimate guide for the mankind. "He does not speak out of his desire. This is nothing but a revelation that is conveyed to him." [An-Najm: 3-4]

Moving further, the Noble Quran contends that much less his words, even his character and natural disposition do not yield to carnal desires: "And you are certainly on the most exalted standard of moral excellence." [Al-Qalam: 4]

These verses are sufficient proofs that the practical, verbal, as well as moral examples of the Prophet (PBUH) all

(156) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 5.

stem from the divine revelation. And not stopping at that, the Holy Quran instructs him in very explicit words: “O Prophet, We have put you on the Right Way (Shari'ah) concerning the religion, so follow it, and do not yield to the desires of ignorant people.” [Al-Jāthiyah; 18]

This elaboration makes it clear that there is no religious or worldly affair for which the Prophet (PBUH) has not received divine revelation and complete guidance from Allah and, that being so, he does not need to comply with the followers of desire. But these critics who lack proper understanding do not shy away from claiming that the blessed prophets of Allah are compelled to obey the clothing and social customs of the same people for whose guidance they are sent, as if they do not receive any guidance from Allah – God forbid – pertaining to these matters. “What a terrible claim that comes out of their mouths! They say nothing but lies.” [Al-Kahf: 5]

Is this claim not tantamount to rejecting the prophethood, distorting its objective, and a clear breach of Quranic commandments?

The truth is that these critics could not grasp the reality. If they had grasped it, it would not have been difficult to understand that the clothing and lifestyle of the prophets conform to the light of their piety, purity, patience, contentment, abstinence, and absorption in the hereafter. Their clothing reflects the same high moral standards. Their lifestyle is characterized by self-restraint and contentment. Their strong connection with Allah as well as their devotion and richness of heart encourages them to wear the minimum required garments and to be always content with it. For this reason, their garments are free from extravagance and vanity,

and the color and style of their attire always display humility, modesty, servitude, and submission to their Lord. In a word, their clothing obeys their natural urges and intrinsic disposition as against regional customs and traditions.

This is why the attire of all the prophets has always remained the same, no matter in which nation and at which place they were born. All the prophets have mostly used ḥullah which consists of *izār* and *ridā'*. The reason is that this ḥullah is the garb of abstinence, and there is no one more observing to abstinence than prophets of Allah.

About the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), even these critics would agree that his common attire was ḥullah. Additionally, the attire of Prophet 'Īsā (PBUH) was also the same ḥullah as per Ṣaḥiḥ Aḥādīth. In one hadith, the Prophet Muhammad informed: "There is no prophet between me and him, that is, 'Īsā (PBUH). He will descent (to the earth). When you see him, recognize him: a man of medium height, reddish fair, wearing two light yellow garments."(157)

It is worth noting that 'Īsā (PBUH) was the prophet of banī Isrā'īl and he was born in the region of Shām which is a cold place compared to Ḥijāz, and still he used ḥullah; which indicates that ḥullah is not specific to Ḥijāz or to the prophets born in this region, rather it is the most preferred dress of the most pious and righteous men of every region and nation.

Moreover, the dress of prophet Ismā'īl (PBUH) was also the same ḥullah, as we have seen in the official letter of 'Umar to the people of Azerbaijan: "O people! Wear izār and ridā'. Wear the clothing of your father, Ismā'īl."

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(157) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwū*d, Hadith no. 4324.

In addition, it seems that the attire of Prophet Ibrāhīm (PBUH) was also the ḥullah, because the rituals of Ḥajj actually mimic his practices, and the iḥrām (which is nothing but ḥullah) is a necessary part of Ḥajj. Therefore, it seems that every follower of Islam, whether rich or poor, has been mandated to imitate the attire of Ibrāhīm (PBUH) at least once in his life.

Other indications and proofs:

(1)

If we collect all the indications and proofs, they will confirm that ḥullah was the dress of all prophets. There are Aḥādīth that prove the dress of the people of heaven will be ḥullah. And according to enlightened men, all the bounties of heaven that will be bestowed on common Muslims, the prophets have already used them in this world, for they live in the heaven although their bodies rest in this world.

(2)

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was instructed to follow the past prophets: "They are those whom Allah had guided. So follow their guidance." [Al-An'ām: 90] And as we have already explained, the instruction of following past prophets is absolute; it is not restricted to any particular kind of practices. Thus, it mandates adherence to the past prophets in everything that has not been explicitly abrogated by Islam, and clothing is one of those things. Further, it is an established fact the usual attire of the final Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was ḥullah, which indicates that the attire of past prophets was also the same, since he was ordered to comply with them. This is a logical inference based on the required meaning (*iqtiḍā al-naṣṣ*) of the above-mentioned

verse, and this kind of inference holds authoritative status in Islamic Jurisprudence.

(3)

When such a perfect person like Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was ordered to comply with the past prophets, it is understandable that every prophet was ordered to comply with the prophets before him, and this compliance was made a distinctive sign of the pious and righteous people. This requires that every prophet must have followed the example of the prophets that foreran him. For instance, the attire of Prophet Muhammad complied with the attire of Prophet ‘Īsā, the attire of ‘Īsā complied with the attire of Prophet Mūsā, and the attire of Mūsā complied with the attire of prophets that came before him. Thus, it also proves that the dress of all the prophets was same.

(4)

‘Umar al-Fārūq encouraged people on using ḥullah by urging them to wear the clothing of Prophet Ismā‘īl instead of telling them to wear the clothing of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is also an indication that the dress of Prophet Ismā‘īl and Prophet Muhammad was same, and the latter adopted this dress in compliance with the former. So, what ‘Umar wants to convey is: “Wear the clothing of the person whom your Prophet Muhammad had followed, that is, Prophet Ismā‘īl, as following him is not different from following the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

This also makes obvious the fact that the garb of piety has always been of the same type, whether it was the era of Muhammad or the era of Ismā‘īl. The cultural or temporal differences have never affected this garb.

(5)

At last, the religious men of other faiths prefer simple and humble garments which is also an indication that their predecessors were also accustomed to the basic form of clothing, i.e. ḥullah, but the nescient successors distorted its form out of ignorance, just like they distorted their religious doctrines. They crossed the boundary line of moderation and developed an extremist idea of abstinence and contentment. For instance, Hindu Yogis adopted loincloth or short dhoti which is, apparently, an altered form of *izār* and was shortened to this extent owing to their ignorant belief that the private area of human body only consists of genitals, and other body parts are not mandatory to be covered. They thought covering non-mandatory parts is a wastage of clothes and is against contentment. And those among them who wear full covering use two pieces of clothes comprising the same *izār* and *ridā'*, though they also tend to distort the original form of ḥullah. So, it is quite possible that the later generations contorted and altered the forms of clothing just as they did with the religious teachings of their predecessors.

Or, for instance, the Jewish monks adopted an extreme form of self-restraint and chose *iḥtibā'* and *ishtimāl* (relying upon a single piece of cloth to cover the entire body). Probably they did that because they saw wearing two pieces of clothes as requiring more cloth and more efforts, ergo against contentment and religiosity. Thus, instead of two clothes, they started to wrap their entire body in one single cloth thereby distorting the form of ḥullah and not discerning that one cloth was insufficient to properly cover the private area which was the purpose of clothing in the first

place. So they cared about one aspect (self-restraint) and forgot the rest (like covering the body and modesty) and ended up twisting the purpose of clothing.

These groups with extremist views of religiosity remembered the abstinence and contentment of their predecessors but failed to grasp the essence of their practices which required an enlightened heart. As a result, they began to copy their attire (ḥullah) without realizing its real objective, and ended up altering it into an unlawful fashion thereby losing its original form.

Looking at these over-religious Hindus, Jews, and monks of other faiths, we can safely conclude that their predecessors and the finding fathers of their religions whose patterns they follow – some of whom were indeed prophets of God and some others we do not know about with certainty – were not bound to any customs or traditions in their clothing and lifestyle. Rather, they followed their intrinsic disposition and natural urges of piety, religiosity, and contentment to adopt the simplest and humblest form of clothing, and cultural and societal differences could not affect their semblance in any way.

After looking at these evidences from the real world, how ridiculous and childish seems the claim that every prophet was bound to follow his regional culture and traditions; If he was born in London, he would have sported pant, coat, and hat; If he was born in Iran, he would have donned their headdress; If he was born in India, he would have worn Achkan and Indian turban. In other words, the prophets had no personal inclination or inner urge to comply with, and they – just like any other resident of these lands – followed the local custom instead of religion, diversity

instead of unification, and volatility instead of consistency. In short, they did exactly what they saw other people doing.

Furthermore, what is more surprising is the fact that in this era of irreligion and materialism, the devout men of all major religions; Hindu Yogis, Christian Priests, Jewish Rabbis, Buddhist Monks, and Muslim Mystics are holding fast to their traditional religious attire up to the level of their respective understandings in all over the world, be it China, Japan, India, or Iran, but your "intellect" still believes that their forerunners followed the customs of their respective times and had they been in today's India, Iran, China, or Japan, they would have blindly adhered to the culture and traditions of these lands; They would have been utterly impressed by modern civilization and all their piety and religiosity would have been in vain. Or, to put it differently, the predecessors were less religious and less pious than their successors, and the successors have surpassed their predecessors in terms of practicing religious teachings; It is as if the roots are dry but the tree is still flourishing; which is nothing but sheer irrationality.

To conclude, the claim that 'prophets are adherents of their people in terms of clothing and way of living' is refuted by logic, history, observation, as well as experience. Because accepting this claim implies that prophets themselves were followers instead of being the role model, which is against the objective of prophethood.

(6)

Once this claim is disapproved, the assumption that was based on this claim – that if the Prophet Muhammad was sent to London or Germany, he would have complied with

the attire of these countries – also stands invalid. Even if we accept it for a moment then, first of all, it is purely an assumption and an imaginary scenario that 'if he was sent to London, he would have done so and so'. If it had happened, we would have definitely agreed with you. But when it did not happen, why are you making a fuss about it and creating imaginary scenarios? Secondly, this statement is factually incorrect and suggestive of the speaker's incoherence. What he should say instead is: "The Prophet (PBUH) went to London and Germany but he disliked their dresses and refused to wear them." Because going to a place and being in its close proximity does not necessarily require physical proximity, as sometimes closeness in knowledge is all that is required.

Allah the Exalted is closer to humankind than their jugular vein, but this closeness is not in space or time rather in knowledge, as the Almighty is beyond the limitations of space and time. He is always with his servants, but not physically rather in terms of knowledge. In the same way, the Prophet (PBUH) travelled to all these countries, but not physically rather in terms of knowledge, as was suitable for his status. When the Prophet (PBUH) forbade the attires of the people of London and Germany that were or would be their distinctive signs at any given point of time, it was as if he travelled to these countries, though not physically, but in the domain of knowledge, which proved to be more powerful and more fruitful.

When a person – who is equipped with divine knowledge – could formulate a complete system of laws while sitting at one place, why are you hell-bent on making him rove all over the world and causing him the burden unsuited for his stature?

Now, the only thing that is left for us to investigate is: “What is the distinctive attire of Londoners and Germans which makes them stand out?” instead of the absurd rhetoric like “If the Prophet (PBUH) was in London, he would have done so and so.”

In short, this statement is ridiculous and nonsensical in two ways: Firstly, because its premise is purely imaginary and fictitious. Secondly, this statement itself is nothing more than a logical fallacy. Thus, the decree issued by Syed Ahmad Khan relying on this fallacious argument – that Indian Muslims are absolutely free to adopt the clothing of any nation or community disregarding their religious honor and self-dependency – is even more hopeless and unavailing. Such absurd claims are not expected from any human being who possess an iota of knowledge and rationality.

Fifth objection: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan writes:

> “Can a Muslim be declared kafir for such trivial things as wrapping dhoti, riding horse cart, or adopting outward similarity despite believing in Oneness of God and Messengership of Muhammad? Never! So the truth is that the hadith – “Whoever imitates a people is one of them” – is rejected by the standards of both narration and comprehension.”

This objection has been put up as a rhetorical question, and the aim is to deny the unlawfulness of imitation for Muslims and to affirm its permissibility.

The summary of the rhetorical question is: Will we become kafir by merely imitating non-Muslims in these

small matters? And the aim is: We will not become kafir and, therefore, there is nothing wrong in imitating them.

The point this rhetorical question wants to make is: Had this imitation been conducive to disbelief, it would have been forbidden. But since it is not conducive to disbelief, it is not forbidden. So, this statement essentially encloses three claims:

1- The only forbidden actions in the eyes of Shariah are the ones that lead to kufr. And since according to the objector, the above-mentioned examples of imitation do not lead to kufr or affect the faith of the imitator, it implies that:
2- The outside does not affect the inside. That is to say, external actions do not have any impact on internal states of human being. Further, the rhetorical question trivializes the small instances of imitation, which point to the third point:
3- The particular instances of a general law – whether the law is prohibitive or imperative – are not worthy of consideration. Instead, complying with the imperative or prohibitive command to a certain degree is enough to realize the objective of Shariah. Therefore, if imitating the disbelievers is prohibited by Shariah, it means that Muslims are required to avoid the imitation as a whole, and this requirement can be fulfilled by observing this rule in one or two instances. It is not that one has to avoid each and every instance of imitation in order to fulfill this command.

These are three pillars on which rests the entire structure of the objection. If these pillars are removed, the whole structure will collapse and the objectors will have

nowhere to go. We shall – by the will of Allah and relying on His assistance – critically examine all three made-up points to expose the reality of this hocus-pocus and to separate the truth from falsehood.

Are the only forbidden actions the ones that lead to kufr? The claim of these objectors – that the only forbidden actions in the eyes of Shariah are the ones that lead to kufr – is a ridiculous and foolish claim. If it is accepted that imitation of disbelievers is not forbidden because not all forms of imitation amount to disbelief, does it mean that such major sins as drinking, gambling, adultery, lying, slandering, backbiting, creating discord, and causing disunity are not forbidden either? Because these actions do not amount to disbelief and the person committing these sins is not considered a kafir. If this is what these objectors believe, then some pages of Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq should have thrown light on the permissibility of these things just like they did with the matter of imitation.

This is a strange principle that permits every misdeed which is not conducive to disbelief. It implies that disbelief is the only misdeed in this world, and all other sins and wrongdoings are neither bad nor avoiding them is mandatory. So, one should only be mindful of disbelief, while he should not care about committing other sins at all. In other words, one must be afraid of staying forever in the hellfire, but his efforts to avoid entering the hellfire are worthless.

However, the truth is that the one who is not afraid of sins, he is generally unafraid of disbelief as well. Those who do not hesitate to adopt the causes are unconcerned about the consequences too. Those who indulge in snooping and

spying on other people's wealth or breaking into their houses are not reluctant to steal, as the above actions are nothing but preludes to theft.

In the same way, those who do not avoid the imitation of disbelievers in outward appearance, they do not generally hesitate to imitate them in inward qualities too, as outward imitation is a prelude to inward imitation. It is for this reason that Umm al-Mu'minīn ʿĀʾishah (r.a) said: "Beware of seemingly insignificant sins (for they are conducive to major sins)".

At this stage, one may easily surmise that these gullible individuals would not have avoided imitation even if it was an open act of kufr. Their attempt to justify imitation by arguing that it is not an act of disbelief is nothing but deception. They are trying to deceive the Shariah of Allah. Their tricks may work for ignorant masses, but they can never mislead the Omniscient Allah.

> "They seek to deceive Allah and the believers, yet they only deceive themselves, but they fail to perceive it. There is sickness in their hearts, and Allah lets their sickness increase. They will suffer a painful punishment for their lies." [Al-Baqarah: 9-10]

Even if we admit that imitation of disbelievers is not disbelief in itself, how does it prove the permissibility of imitation? How does absence of disbelief prove absence of prohibition?

And since it does not prove anything, our stance on the prohibition of imitation stands valid. It is possible that one thing is not an act of disbelief but is still prohibited.

Hence, it is clear that the argument of these objectors is very feeble and that the imitation of unbelievers is forbidden, though not an act of kufr. Now, I ask the objectors: Is the imitation that is prohibited by Shariah a good deed or bad deed, according to you? If it is a good deed, you will have to say that drinking, gambling, adultery, and backbiting etc. are also good deeds despite being prohibited by Shariah. And if you confess that imitation of unbelievers is a bad deed, then we are unable to understand your claim that 'a Muslim may imitate any non-Muslim community – even in their religious symbols – without any problem'.

Is committing sins and Shariah prohibited practices something commendable, as per you? If this was the case and there was nothing wrong in those practices, why did Shariah prohibit them in the first place? Was the only aim of Shariah to give contradictory instructions so that people regard these practices as sin but, at the same time, do not see anything wrong in committing them?

It is, perhaps, your own made-up rule that you do not see any wrong in committing Shariah prohibited practices and you have doubts about Shariah obligations.

To conclude, the proposition put forward by the doubters – that the only forbidden actions are the ones that lead to kufr – is absolutely incorrect. It may cause an irreparable damage to Islam. It will make humans audacious against God and will give them a free play in the sanctuaries of major and minor sins. Thus, if – as per Syed Ahmad Khan – wrapping dhoti, riding horse cart, and adopting outward similarity do not make one a disbeliever, we still consider these practices as forbidden, because being forbidden in the eyes of Shariah does not depend on disbelief.

The effects of external actions on internal states: The second point in their claim is that outward appearance has nothing to do with inward qualities. If a Muslim assumes the semblance of Christians from head to toe, will it impact his belief in the oneness of God and messengership of Muhammad? No, right? Because these beliefs are ingrained in the heart while the semblance and appearance are on the surface of the body with no connection to the heart. Thus, we should not make a fuss about outward similarity with non-Muslims and should not call it a violation of Shariah law.

Spoiling the appearance is also disgraceful: For a moment, we accept that change in appearance does not affect the spirit of Islam and imitation of non-Muslims does not take away the reality of faith. However, is spoiling the appearance while retaining the spirit any less disgraceful? Is this world and everything in this world not hell-bent on adorning its surface and having the most beautiful appearance possible? When it is so, why only Islam should be deprived of this right? Can even a lunatic agree to let the face of a beloved be blackened, some of his body parts be mutilated, or disfiguring injuries be inflicted just because these defacements do not eliminate his life?

Even if we suppose that outward emulation does not have any impact on the inside, the effects of outward imitation on the surface itself are so ugly that nothing can compensate for that. Indeed, defacement per se is no lesser a defect.

There are many people in this world who are lame, blind, handicapped, or suffering from other disabilities, yet they are alive and are considered humans. However, do you like this life of impairment for them? Or would you prefer

this life for yourself? So what made you prefer such disfigurement and defacement for Islam? How come intellectuals like you convinced yourselves to be content with one half of the religion (faith in the heart) while ruining the other half (outward display of Islam), in spite of the fact that both inside faith and outside display of Islam are constituents of the same reality. Neither one part can be relied upon nor can it survive without the other.

This is why Ibn Shāhīn reported on the authority of Muhammad ibn ‘Alī: “Faith and practice are two close associates. None of them is useful without the other.”(158)

Moreover, accepting one part of religion (Imān/faith) and rejecting the other part (Islam/practice) was a particular habit of Jews who used to believe in some and disbelieve the other. This kind of half-belief has been termed as pure disbelief by the Quran:

> “Surely those who deny Allah and His messengers and wish to make a distinction between Allah and His messengers, saying, “We believe in some and disbelieve in others,” desiring to forge a compromise, they are indeed the true disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.” [An-Nisā’: 150-151]

The above discussion was based on the supposition that we – for a moment – agree with the objectors that outward changes do not affect the inward state. But now

(158) ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 1:36, no. 60.

taking one step further, we state the truth because of which Islam outright forbade the outward imitation.

The effects of outward on the inward: The outward activity and surface movement affect the inward essence both positively and negatively; and this is not limited to religious matters, but everything in this universe functions under the same principle. If the surface undergoes some constructive activity, the substance receives the positive effects. If the surface undergoes some destructive activity, the substance suffers the negative impacts.

The reason is that this universe is neither purely made of essences and souls, that these abstract elements could exist without physical bodies, nor it is made of solely bodies and forms, that the bodies could survive without the souls. Instead, this universe is a combination of both body and soul, outward and inward, and form and essence.

Then, the Creator of this universe allocated actions to the bodies and the faculty to perform actions to the souls. That is, he created souls as the source of actions and bodies as the demonstrators of actions. Then, the same kind of relation that was between the soul and the body was placed between the faculties of soul and the actions of body. To illustrate, just as the existence of soul depended on the existence of body and vice versa, so was the relationship between faculties and actions; The faculties required actions to establish themselves and to affirm their establishment, and the actions relied upon faculties for their emergence and continuance.

In the absence of faculties of soul, the actions will cease to exist. And in the absence of actions, the abilities and faculties of soul will become weak and will begin to vanish.

Thus, it is clear that soul exerts the effect of existence through its inward faculties, and the bodily actions influence the soul by strengthening its faculties. In addition, it also comes to light that if bodily actions are good, they will have positive impact on the soul, and if they are bad, then they will have negative impact on the soul. So, the beauty or ugliness of outward appearance and its constructive or destructive nature continuously channel its positive or negative effects to the soul.

In short, both body and soul – or faculties and actions – affect and influence one another, and this applies to every being of this universe regardless of whether it is human, animal, plant, or inanimate object.

The examples of outward influencing the inward in tangible things: For example, let's first look at vegetation. The essence of flowers (fragrance) lies in their soft and delicate petals. If petals of rose or jasmine are moved apart, their fragrance will fade away. So, although the action of splitting was not executed directly on the fragrance but on the petals, yet the manipulation of its body straightaway affected the essence.

Or – for example – look at human being, his power of sight lies in the cornea of his eyes and his faculty of hearing works behind the curtain of his eardrum. If the cornea or eardrum is damaged, can he still see or hear things? Or, if his entire body is crushed, can he still survive? Never! Even though these damages were inflicted on the surface of his body and not directly on his faculties, yet the change in the outward instantly affected the inward, and that too in such a synchronized manner that the inward got affected just as much as the outward did. And no one is even capable of

planting the faculty of sight – after the loss of eye – in any other part of the body, like hand or leg etc.

Likewise, if you look at knowledge and other abstract things, you will find the same process of effect and influence. The meaning of an eloquent speech is hidden in the words. If words are distorted or the expressions are altered, the meaning will disappear along with the words that contained the meaning. Even though the alteration took place in words and not in meaning, the meaning owed its existence to words and, therefore, the removal of words resulted in the disappearance of meaning.

Further, the words uttered by tongue have far more piercing impact on the human soul than spears and arrows. One abusive word, though uttered by mistake, is enough to make one's blood boil and drive him crazy, as the saying goes: The wounds given by a sword can be healed but nothing can heal a wound given by words. Conversely, if an infuriated person is addressed with kind words and soft tone, it works like a magic pill and instantly soothes his nerves.

If the outward has no impact on the inward, if words have no effect on the meaning, and if actions do not influence the intrinsic faculties, then what are these changes and why are they taking place? What does the existence of essence mean? Why do souls get infuriated and irked by offensive remarks?

Do these objectors not look at themselves how bathing and cleaning the body have refreshing effects on the soul? And how keeping the body messy and dirty channels the same effects to the soul. If clothes are neat and tidy, the soul feels delighted, and if they are soiled and stained, the soul feels gloomy. When clothes are sprayed with perfumes,

the soul is filled with happiness and pleasure, and when clothes are filthy, it produces annoyance and discomfort.

It is despite the fact that there are disparities between spiritual and material world, rather these are two opposite realms. Nevertheless, spirits are still influenced by the matter owing to their natural proximity and companionship. For instance, they get affected by physical purity and impurity of the body. So, why does it seem impossible for the soul to be affected by abstract purity and impurity of body and clothes in the same manner as it is influenced by physical effects of body and clothes, even more so because the soul itself is an abstract being.

For us as well as for everyone who has been given a share in wisdom and insight, it is very much possible that abstract impurities of body and clothes – i.e. the fashions and styles of clothing which are against the way of the Prophet (PBUH), which violate the Islamic law, and which assume the manners of adornment disliked by Allah and his Messenger – and abstract virtues of body and clothes – i.e. the fashions and styles that comply with the way of the Prophet (PBUH), are within the limits prescribed by Islamic law, and are acceptable by Allah and his Messenger – penetrate human soul and infiltrate his heart thereby having the same impact on the heart as they had on the body and clothes.

Our claim in the light of common experience: It is a common experience that fashions and styles of clothing and other modes of adornment affect the intrinsic disposition of human being. These effects are either positive or negative, and in any case they bring radical changes to human nature.

If a vigorous and brave man adopts delicate garments, precious ornaments, and extremely luxurious and

comfortable lifestyle, no sooner does he begin to prioritize these things than his heart starts to harbor cowardice, passiveness, and comfort-seeking instead of courage, vigor, and enthusiasm. Gradually, he loses all of his manly qualities and his inside gets filled with feminine traits just like his outside became a reflection of womanly qualities.

Similarly, when a person embraces the attires of the rich, all the characteristics that accompany such attires – like arrogance, pride, disdain, and so on – automatically creep into his heart. And when he assumes the semblance of the poor, all the accompanying characteristics – such as humility, humbleness, and meekness – color his soul in their colors.

Likewise, if a person dons the garb of learned and enlightened men, the characteristics of this garb – righteousness, piety, religiosity, and modesty, etc. – illuminate his soul. And if he dresses himself in the outfit of ignorant, fool, and wicked individuals, the evil qualities of foxiness, deceptiveness, and destructiveness take root inside his heart and encourage him to behave in the same manner.

It is very surprising that the objectors show no hesitation in acknowledging these effects of the outward appearance on the inward state, since these effects are visible to their eyes. But when Allah and his Prophet talk about the same effects in the religious context, they plainly deny it. It seems that they trust their eyes more than they trust the revelation of Allah and his Messenger, whereas the reality of faith (Imān) is nothing more than believing in what Allah and his Messenger told us and trusting it more than our own observations and experiences.

Anyway, whether they believe or not is up to them, but what Islam is saying is not different from what our observation and experience say. All Islam is saying is that repeated action of any sort results in strengthening the relevant human abilities and faculties. If a person repeats a good deed, this will strengthen the ability and the urge to do good. If he repeats a bad deed, it will strengthen the ability and urge to do bad. It does not matter whether the deeds – good or bad – are related to religious life or worldly life, religious affairs or secular affairs.

The effectiveness of the outward in the light of Shariah: About good deeds, the Shariah has informed us that bodily actions, styles of clothing, and types of fabric affect one's faith by either increasing it or reducing it. In one hadith, it is mentioned that wearing woolen garments (which is an action related to the outward appearance) produces the sweetness of faith, which is an inward condition: "Whoever wants to taste the sweetness of faith, he should wear the wool."(159)

In another hadith, wearing turban has been associated with an increase in forbearance: "Wear the Turban as it will increase your forbearance."(160)

In one more hadith, straightening the rows during prayers has been advised to avoid differences of heart: "Make the rows straight and do not differ, lest your hearts differ."(161)

Further, just as virtuous deeds channel their virtuous effects to human heart, misdeeds also channel their evil effects. The Holy Quran has informed us that misdeeds cause a stain on

(159) ʻAlī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 15:302, no. 41119.
(160) Ibid, no. 41135.
(161) Ibid, 8:297, no. 23000.

the heart which gradually deprives a man of the ability to accept the truth. This fact has been explained in the Holy Quran through different expressions, like encrusting, sealing, covering, and deafness of hearts. "Of course not! Rather, all (the filth) they have earned has rusted and encrusted their hearts." [Al-Muṭaffifīn: 14] "It is Allah Who has sealed their hearts for their disbelief." [An-Nisā': 155]

This is why the Prophet (PBUH) has warned us to avoid seemingly insignificant sins: "Beware of sins that are seen as insignificant, for they will keep accumulating until they destroy a man."(162)

The message of the hadith is that minor sins encourage on committing major ones, and major sins lead to undermining the sins and disbelief, which is indeed a destructive thing. The great Tābi'ī, Mujāhid says: "Heart is like an open palm. When one commits a sin, it becomes tight, and when he commits more sins, it becomes tighter to the point that it gets totally sealed. This is what the "rust" mentioned in the Quran refers to."(163)

Abū Hurairah narrated that: The Messenger of Allah said: "Verily, when the slave (of Allah) commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. When he refrains from it, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he returns, it increases until it covers his entire heart. And that is the 'rust' which Allah mentioned: 'Nay, but on their hearts caused the rust that which they used to earn.'"(164)

(162) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Hadith no. 3818.

(163) Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb* aka *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turās al-'Arabi, 1420 A.H.), 31:88.

(164) Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā at-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith 3334.

In brief, previous traditions told us that noble actions result in strengthening the faith and Islamic moral values, while these verses and traditions demonstrate that evil actions cause rusting of the hearts as well as disbelief, thus proving the claim of Islamic Shariah that outward actions have a significant impact on human heart.

The effectiveness of the outward is a matter unanimously agreed upon: Moreover, the claim of effectiveness of the outward is not a claim made by Islam alone. Rather, all religions of the world are in agreement on this matter. In fact, all religions have been built on the basis of this same principle, because every religion aims at spiritual upliftment of human being, and spiritual upliftment is impossible without actions, for the soul is already loaded with various faculties and spiritual states but it lacks actions. So, it was for the sake of actions and to make use of inherent faculties that the soul was given the garb of the body, so that the actions lead to strengthening the faculties relevant to those actions. And it requires no mention that actions are related to body and not soul.

Because of this, the religious practices ordained by all the religions to realize their objective of spiritual development concern human body instead of soul. All the injunctions pertaining to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, charity, social norms, commercial transactions, and so on involve human body and not the soul.

If, looking at this aspect, it is maintained that the objective of religions is just to bind human bodies to their injunctions, in other words soul and upliftment of soul has nothing to do with religions, then the question is: where should one look for purification and upliftment of the soul

when even religions are not providing any guidance in this regard? And if spiritual upliftment and purification is considered the most prominent objective of religions (as is actually the case), then the question is: why did religions give binding commands that impose restrictions on the body parts?

The only solution for this complication is to accept that spiritual development is the primary objective of religions and bodily actions are the means to realize this objective. Additionally, we must also accept that there is a relationship based on effectiveness and influence between body and soul; the actions and movements of our bodies directly affect our souls, so that religious injunctions stay relevant to their main objective, that is, spiritual development. Otherwise, if the effectiveness of bodily actions on the soul is disregarded, the very foundation all religions will be demolished and the very existence of human being in this world will become aimless.

Therefore, it is more sensible to uproot the objection posed by these criticizers instead of uprooting all the religions on the basis of their objection. Now, not only Islam but all religions of the world have the right to laugh on the absurdity of this statement uttered under the intoxication of free speech and liberty of thought: "Will wearing this attire, doing this thing, or committing other small mistakes affect our faith?"

The creation of Allah and his decree will force them to admit that outward actions can produce the effects of both belief and disbelief inside the heart, just as they can remove both belief and disbelief from the heart. Thus, the claim of these halfwits that outward has no effects on the inward is

against the creation and decree of Allah and is also at odds with all religions of the world.

Historical evidences on the point in question: After having a look at theoretical and practical aspects of the matter in question, if we cast a glance at events of historical importance, we find them too substantiating the effectiveness of the outward. These events exhibit that whenever an individual or community did something good (even if they had no particular intention of doing good), the goodness ultimately took root in their hearts; and whenever an individual or community did something evil (even if they had no particular intention of committing evil), the evil found way to their hearts. Here are some instances:

1. In the first chapter, we have mentioned about ʻAmr ibn Luḥay ibn Qamʻah ibn Khandaf who had placed idols inside the holy Kaaba to imitate the idol worshippers of Yamen. Even though his intention was not to commit the sin of idolatry or polytheism, rather he probably did that to concentrate his heart and to focus his attention in one direction, but since this act was an act of idolatry in itself, it ultimately led to planting the seed of polytheism in the hearts of Arabs and depriving them of the light of the religion of Ibrāhīm (PBUH). When their bodies committed an evil, their hearts accepted the effects of the same evil.
2. Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī wrote in his commentary on *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*: "Indeed, the embracing of Islam by magicians in the story of Mūsā (PBUH) was because Allah had guided them, as both guidance and misguidance are in His control.

However, the apparent cause for their guidance was the imitation of Mūsā (PBUH), for they had come to the field wearing the same attire as Mūsā (PBUH). So, they had already adopted the semblance of Mūsā before coming for the competition and there was no visible difference and disparity between them. At the end, this outward similarity resulted in them embracing the inward uniformity with Mūsā and accepting his religion. If this was not the case, their reaction to Mūsā's win could have been something like: He is a bigger magician than us, so his victory does not prove that he is truthful in his claims but that he is a maestro in magic."

3. Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī further stated: "There was a clown in the court of Pharaoh who used to entertain the Pharaoh and his courtiers by impersonating Mūsā (PBUH), wearing the same clothes as his, holding a stick in his hands like he did, mimicking the way he spoke, and making fun of his preaching. He was saved from being submerged with the Pharaoh, upon which Mūsā (PBUH) complained to his Lord: Why was he saved when he was the one who hurt me the most and made fun of me? The Lord answered to him: 'Indeed, he has hurt you and his heart is full of disbelief, but he used to wear the same attire as you do, he used to speak the same way as you speak, and he used to imitate you in all your outward behavior. So, I was not going to punish him while he had the appearance of my beloved. Due to him imitating your behavior, I have saved him from the punishment of this world, but since his heart is filled with disbelief, the punishment of the afterlife is certain.'

4. One instance from the prophetic era: Abū Maḥdhūrah also became a Muslim by virtue of outward imitation. The incident took place as follows: The Islamic army was returning from the battle of Ḥunayn and stopped at some place to take rest. When it was time to pray, the mu'azzin started to call adhān. Abū Maḥdhūrah and some other youths of a nearby village started to imitate the sound of the mu'azzin and to mock him. The Prophet (PBUH) noticed this and ordered to bring these boys to him. The Prophet (PBUH) asked: who was mimicking the adhān? All the boys pointed to Abū Maḥdhūrah. So Abū Maḥdhūrah was stopped there and rest of the boys were let go. The Prophet (PBUH) ordered him to stand up and imitate the adhān once again. He stood up and began to pronounce the words of adhān unwillingly. But gradually these words started to influence his soul and he finally embraced Islam by heart. This movement of tongue left an everlasting impact on his mind, and the same words of Shahādah that he was first uttering unwillingly reached the core of his heart thereby transforming Abū Maḥdhūrah into a shining star of the history of Islam.

This last incident also makes it clear that the only way for prophetic effects to reach the core of the heart is through declaring the words of Shahādah by tongue, because when something that is not already there is infused inside the heart, the only practical method to do it is through outwardly embracing it first. Tongue and other body parts are the outward of heart and soul, so any effects that are embraced

by the outward will definitely extend to the inward. As a Persian poet says: (Translation) When you purify your outward, you inward shall be purified for sure.

This is why the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Submit even if you do not like.”[165] Because this outward submission ultimately leads to heartfelt submission.

For the same reason, The Prophet (PBUH) has advised to feign crying in order to instill the fear of Allah in one’s heart: “Weep, and if you cannot weep then pretend to weep.”[166]

And this same fundamental truth that “the outward influences the inward” has been described in the utmost lucid manner by the hadith of Abū Dāwūd which the objectors have spared no efforts to render invalid: “Whoever imitates a people becomes one of them.”

In conclusion, it has become evident that whenever Islam (outward practice) is attacked, the Imān (the faith within the heart) will definitely be affected. If Islamic practices are abandoned, the spirit of those practices will also vanish. If one organ of the religion is abolished, it will result in abolishing the religion entirely. Therefore, the claim that outward appearance has no effect on the inward state is nothing more than a deception and a satanic ploy, which is neither supported by Shariah nor by logic.

Thus, the claim of these objectors that “the hadith of imitation stands rejected as per the standards of both riwāyat and dirāyat” is itself rejected and disregarded. The arguments that they put forward have turned against them.

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(165) ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʿāl*, 1:93, no. 410.
(166) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 4196.

> "They try to extinguish God's light with their mouths, but God insists on bringing His light to its fullness, even if the disbelievers hate it." [At-Tawbah: 32]

Outward actions are indicative of inward feelings: So far, by the grace of Almighty, we have successfully proved that outward action of imitation affects the internal state and brings about revolutionary changes inside the heart. However, a contemplative observation will reveal that actually it is not the heart that is influenced by the act of imitation, rather a prior change in the heart causes the acts of imitation to appear through bodily actions, and then the same acts of imitation inculcate that change inside the heart.

Therefore, the act of imitation is merely an indication of the revolution taking place inside the heart, which is a secondary thing. Otherwise, the heart had already undergone this change much before this act of imitation, because actions cannot influence the heart before they are produced by parts of the body, and body parts cannot produce an action unless there is a pre-existing impulse for this action inside the heart, the heart prepares for it, and then it decides to initiate the action. In other words, every action is first initiated from the inside and later on the external body parts bring it to the fore. So, every action is a reflection of its hidden impulse, and the outward is a discloser of what is inside.

The example of this is like a tree that first emerges from underground roots and then as it grows and spreads its branches, the roots further penetrate in the ground and achieve more firmness. In the same way, when an imitator embraces a semblance, it first originates from its underground roots (the inclination and urge of his inside) and then as the forms of imitation engulf his outward appearance,

the urge for imitation keeps getting stronger in his heart until, one day, imitation becomes the only purpose and the sole ambition of his life.

So, the imitator actually deceives himself by thinking that outward imitation of non-Muslims has no negative effects on his heart or it may affect the heart at some point in future, as if his heart is protected from these effects for the time being when the act of imitation is going on. But I want to clarify to him that his outward imitation of non-Muslims is – in fact – a reflection of the impurity of his disposition and an aftereffect of his heart being overtaken by the admiration for disbelievers and the love for imitation. It is not this outward similitude that has planted the seed of imitation in his heart, but the seed was already planted by his wicked nature and this act of outward imitation has only brought its fruits to the surface. Thus, if an imitator believes that this imitation is confined to the surface and his inside is safe, he is being naive and is basically misleading himself. I would like to ensure him that corrupt appearance is an indication of his corrupt inner self and not an upright one.

I advise these silly individuals to have a look at a sick person whose face is out of sort, who has dark circles around his eyes, and whose color is pale, and then tell us: is this poor appearance a sign of health or illness? Obviously, this dreadful condition indicates that he is sick and weak from inside, and not healthy.

In the same manner, those unfortunate human beings whose bodies reflect their spiritual illness, whose faces, hands, feet, clothing, eating, and drinking point to their dabbling with disbelief, irreligiosity, and ungodliness, will these signs indicate that they are Muslims from inside? That their hearts are filled

with the fear of God? That they are devout believers and pious men? That their inside is illuminated with spirituality though their outside manifests darkness? Never! Godliness always displays its effects on the outside and so does ungodliness. If there is piety and righteousness, it will be manifested in its pious form, and if there is impiety and deception, it will be manifested in its respective form.

The Prophet (PBUH) has highlighted this fact in the following words:

> "Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart."(167)

And in another tradition:

> "Deeds are like vessels. If the lower part is good then the upper part will be good, and if the lower part is bad then the upper part will be bad."(168)

In short, outward and inward are two dimensions of the same reality or two ends of the same thing which are referred to with different names, such as outside and inside, body and soul, outward and inward. And since the existence of the soul precedes the existence of the body, the outside body cannot perform an action unless it is stimulated by the inside.

Therefore, these naive individuals need to reconsider their suppositions who do not think twice before saying or

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(167) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 52.
(168) Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Hadith no. 4199.

writing such ridiculous things as "will outward imitation of non-Muslims damage our faith?" Someone should inform them that the damage will not be done rather it has already been done, and this outward imitation is nothing but the aftereffect of that very damage. Had their hearts been pure and uncorrupted, they would not have resorted to distorting their appearance. The truth is that they are deprived of seeing eyes and contemplative minds, so neither do they see nor understand.

> "Verily it is not the eyes that turn blind, but what turns blind is the hearts contained in the chests." [Al-Ḥajj: 46]

Now – by the grace of the Almighty – we have debunked the objectors' claim that 'outward appearance has no impact on the inward', and we have successfully proved that this claim is nothing but a misconception of the heedless or an excuse of the unwary individuals. Even if we suppose – for the sake of argument – that the outward has no effects on the inward, still is it any less problematic that the outward is ruined? And if it does affect the inward, then it is another problem. Furthermore, the truth is that the inward gets corrupted much before the outward, so waiting for inward corruption after ruining the outward is nothing but a deception to oneself. Hence, denying the effectiveness of the outward amounts to rejecting the decree of Allah and his way of running this universe.

> "Evil is the example of those who have rejected Allah's verses. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people." [Al-Jum'ah: 5]

Significance of particular instances of general law: The third claim in their objection is that particular instances

of a general law are not important; rather partial fulfilment of the general law is sufficient which can be accomplished by observing the law in one or two instances. So, since refraining from imitation and being different from disbelievers is a general rule that may be applicable to a number of instances, it should be enough to observe this rule in one or two cases. In other words, if we appear different from disbelievers in few aspects and refrain from imitating them in a couple of things, it will be enough to be called a law abiding Muslim and to discharge our duty. It is not necessary to constrain the Muslim ummah to avoid the imitation of non-Muslims in each and every aspect of life.

Answer: First of all, this objection does not have any sound basis or logical ground that we should bother to answer it. Because if this objector considers the entire religion of Islam as binding and statutory (and he surely does as appears from him repeatedly using the name 'Islam' in Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq and calling himself a Muslim), how can he declare one part of the religion as non-binding? And if he really believes that some parts of the religion are non-binding and unnecessary, then what about the statutory status of the whole religion?

This is same as someone calling the entire human body a product of intelligent design and, at the same time, claiming that some parts of the body, like nails or hair, are useless and unnecessary. If he is being truthful in calling some body parts as useless, then he is surely lying about the entire body being the product of intelligent design. And if he is truthful about the whole body, then he is definitely wrong about these specific body parts.

Likewise, these self-proclaimed intellectuals call the entire body of Islam a product of wisdom but reject one of its important components, that is, avoiding the imitation and being different from disbelievers. So, it is certain that they are untruthful in either of the two statements. Therefore, the very foundation of their objection turned out to be made of contradictory statements and, as a result, is out of the scope of possibility. Thus, we do not need to bother to answer it.

Still, if we assume this objection as having some value and requiring a solution, then the question is: Do you think that avoiding the imitation is unnecessary as a belief or as a practice? If you think that it is practically unnecessary to sever all ties of similitude with non-Muslims, and it is sufficient to maintain the difference in some respects – for example, a Muslim may wear coat, pant, tie, and other pieces of Christian attire with an addition of Islamic cap – then I would ask you one question: Can you wear a feminine dress with only a men's cap to maintain the distinction and go out in a civilized society without feeling ashamed and being ridiculed? If you can do this against societal norms, you may be allowed to do the same against the norms of Islam. But if you feel shy of the people like you, why do you not feel shy of your Creator? When you do not hesitate to criticize a person who imitates women but maintains a partial difference, why do you hate it when someone criticizes you for imitating disbelievers and insisting that partial dissimilarity is enough?

And if you see it unnecessary – as a belief – to oppose disbelievers in everything and to avoid their imitation, then the question is: Do you have any proof for this belief of yours? Or are you rejecting one component of Islam – which is undoubtedly an important component – by declaring it useless and unnecessary without any valid proof?

If you are speaking without proof, you need to worry about your hereafter as it amounts to fabricating lies against God and rejecting part of his religion.

> "Who could be more wicked than the one who invents a lie against Allah and rejects the truth when it comes to him? Is there not an abode in hell for such unbelievers?" [Az-Zumar: 32]

Furthermore, it constitutes not only the rejection of one part of the religion, rather a denial of the religion as a whole and rendering it abolished at one's whim. It is because when opposing disbelievers in each and everything is not necessary in your belief, rather it is enough to avoid their imitation in one or two things, it implies that conformity between Muslims and non-Muslims is lawful, and when it is lawful, then dissimilarity with prophets must also be lawful; because similarity with disbelievers is direct opposite of similarity with prophets, or else the objectives of disbelievers and prophets would be unified and Islam and disbelief would become one. Thus, one must admit that similarity with disbelievers is exactly the same as dissimilarity with prophets.

You should reflect upon your own claims; can the religion survive with such beliefs? And even if it survives, can it be considered statutory? Because the religion of Islam comprises two dimensions: one consists of imperative commands that guide to imitating the prophets, and the other consists of prohibitory rules which include avoiding the imitation of disbelievers. When these profane minds have rejected both imitating the prophets as well as avoiding the imitation of disbelievers as a religious necessity, and neither attaining virtues is important to them nor refraining from the

vices, it means that, according to them, the entire religion is unnecessary.

Someone should ask these so-called reformers why was such a religion needed in the first place in which obligatory is same as the non-obligatory; in which forbidden is equal to the permissible; which effectively has neither prohibition nor permission; which neither requires avoiding a sin nor practicing an obligation; Was there genuinely a need for such a religion to come to this world and challenge the already existing ones? Is it logical to challenge others on such trivial and insignificant matters that are open to be practiced or not to be practiced?

Further, the objector is liable to answer it: Which Islam is that which is famous throughout the world for its inclusiveness, and whose perfectness is acknowledged even by enemies? If it is the same Islam whose picture the pages of Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq have painted as totally unnecessary, then it is startling that the final religion of God is so useless and incomplete that nothing in it requires persistence or restraint. And if that Islam is different and the objector has not been able to discover it yet, in that case he should go looking for that true Islam rather than misleading common Muslims with his baseless arguments.

Do these self-entitled intellectuals not realize that this approach of trivializing every element of religion and legalizing every Shariah prohibition may only lead the masses to fearlessly committing grave sins and abandoning the obligatory practices? What result can this approach yield except weakening the pillars of Islam one by one, erasing its distinctive features, and non-Islamic practices becoming

prevalent among Muslims? As anyone can see it happening today with his own eyes.

Someone should ask them whether this approach facilitates something good and beneficial for common people or they have pushed them into a wrong direction by denying the concept of imitation? Have they not closed the door of guidance and virtue on them and paved the way for evil instead? Are they not turning this world into a chaotic hell of sins by giving each and every one absolute liberty to do whatever he wants and commit whichever offense he desires?

It is utterly deplorable that the predecessors of this ummah exerted themselves in protecting the boundaries of religion and preserving the fundamental laws. They went to the extent of prohibiting the ummah from not only dubious matters but also many permissible things as a precautionary measure. It was by virtue of these efforts that the Islam could reach us in its original form and shape. But these so-called enlightened men are hell-bent on manipulating the same fundamental principles and the boundaries of Islam to only lose the treasure trove left behind by the predecessors and to be misguided from the straight path. They went astray and caused many others to go astray.

In short, if these objectors have just assumed – without any justification – that avoiding the imitation of disbelievers is unnecessary, then they have not only called it unnecessary but have also committed the sin of disparaging the imitation of the prophets, and they must be aware that this is a terrible sin with devastating consequences.

However, if they have some justification for their belief, for example, they say that we have been ordered to imitate the prophets and to avoid the semblance of disbelievers through

imperative sentences like ‘obey the prophet’ and ‘do not imitate the disbelievers’, and being a command form of verb these sentences are *muṭlaq*(169), and it is an established principle that *muṭlaq* requires observing the rule denoted by it in the minimum number of instances. Thus, if we emulate the prophets in a couple of things and be different from them in the rest, or we act differently from disbelievers in a couple of things and conform to them in the rest, then it will be sufficient to fulfill the requirement. So, what is the need to imitate the prophets in each and every matter or to be different from unbelievers in each and every affair?

This is a strange justification, but it exposes the deviation of their hearts and the corruption of their minds. The truth is that these objectors have neither understood the concept of *muṭlaq* nor different ways of its application. They have claimed – out of ignorance – that the commands to imitate the prophets and not to imitate the disbelievers are *muṭlaq* and not *‘ām*(170) and, in the light of the above principle, if one imitates the prophets in some aspects or he avoids imitating the unbelievers in some respects, the command will be fulfilled and the addressees of this command will be absolved of the obligation. But what these objectors do not know is that sometimes other principles of

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(169) Muṭlaq is a terminology in the science of Islamic jurisprudence which denotes a word which is neither qualified nor limited in its application. Muṭlaq refers to one unspecified thing, eg: “free a slave” is Muṭlaq as it refers to one slave but that slave is not specified. In its original state, the Muṭlaq is unspecified and unqualified.

(170) ‘Ām refers to a generally large number of things with a generalized description, eg: “every soul shall taste death” is an ‘ām as it refers to “every” soul without exceptions. The difference between Muṭlaq and ‘ām is that the word which is ‘ām encompasses every member of the category it names, whereas the Muṭlaq word is usually applied to any one of a multitude, but not to all.

Islamic jurisprudence prevail over the *muṭlaq* thereby converting a *muṭlaq* into *'ām*.

For example, when a *muṭlaq* or indefinite noun falls in a negative statement or command, it loses its status as the *muṭlaq* and becomes *'ām* in which every member of its category is included. In case of the former, observing the rule in a couple of instances was sufficient and the compliance was accomplished, but in case of the latter the rule is applied to every member of its class and observing the command in one or two instances is not enough to fulfill the requirement.

To illustrate, if someone is asked: "Comply with one of the Muslims", this indefinite word (one of the Muslims) will be a *muṭlaq*. So, if he complied with any member of the Muslim community, the command will be fulfilled and he will not be required to comply with every Muslim. But if the command is given in a negative sentence, like: "Do not comply with any of the unbelievers", then the same indefinite word will transform into an *'ām* and, as a result, the command will apply to every member of its category. Therefore, he will be required to avoid complying with every unbeliever, and the requirement will not be met if he complies with even one member of the unbelievers.

In the same manner, when the Holy Quran ordered Muslims not to imitate or comply with unbelievers in the following verses:

> "And do not yield to the fancies of those people who went astray before you." [Al-Mā'idah: 77]

"Verily this is My way, the Right Way; therefore follow it and do not follow other ways." [Al-An'ām:153]

"And do not follow the path of the spreaders of corruption." [Al-A'rāf: 142]

"O believers! Do not be like those who slandered Moses." [Al-Aḥzāb: 69]

"O believers! Do not be like the unfaithful." [ʾĀl ʿImrān: 156]

Or when the hadith prohibited the same:

"He is not one of us who resembles other than us. Do not resemble the Jews or the Christians."(171)

Or commanded to:

"Be different from Bedouins."(172)

"Be different from desert-dwellers."(173)

"Be different from non-Arabs."(174)

It was subjected to the same principle; since the command to be unlike disbelievers came in a negative form, it changed from *muṭlaq* to *'ām*. So, this command will not be fulfilled unless one avoids resembling the disbelievers in each and every respect.

Hence, the misconception that the prohibition of imitation is *muṭlaq* and, therefore, the compliance with this prohibition will be achieved by observing it in one or two

(171) At-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith no. 2695.
(172) Could not find the source.
(173) Could not find the source.
(174) Could not find the source.

instances is absolutely incorrect and is an outcome of sheer ignorance.

That said, there remains a question: the command to be different from disbelievers became *‘ām* when it fell in a negative statement, but the command to comply with prophets came in a positive sentence and, therefore, it is still *muṭlaq* and there is no reason to include every member of its class in the ruling. When this is the case, why Muslims are obligated to imitate the prophets in each and every thing? Why is it not sufficient to imitate them in a couple of aspects?

This question is, in fact, a valid one and, undoubtedly, the Divine command to comply with prophets should not be taken as an encompassing rule (*‘ām*) according to the above principle, rather as a *muṭlaq* command. Nevertheless, there are many other verses in the Quran that have nullified its status as *muṭlaq* and have converted it into *‘ām*. The Noble Quran stated:

> "Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it.
> And whatever he forbids you from, leave it."
> [Al-Ḥashr: 7]

In another place, it stated:

> "Follow whatever has been sent down to you
> from your Lord." [Al-A‘rāf: 3]

These verses have the word 'whatever' which is encompassing (*‘ām*) that covers each and every thing given by the Messenger of Allah. Thus, it became obligatory to follow and adhere by everything that the Messenger of Allah has brought to us, and not just few things. At another place, the Glorious Quran has imparted the same message in a different way:

> "Now We have set you ˹O Prophet˺ on the ˹clear˺ Way of faith. So follow it, and do not follow the desires of those who do not know ˹the truth˺." [Al-Jāthiyah: 18]

This verse commands to follow the Shariah, and obviously the Shariah comprises all the components of Islam. So, following the Shariah means following all of its rules, as not following some of its rules will not be considered as compliance with the whole Shariah. This approach is more effective in proving that the ruling to follow the pattern of prophets is *'ām* which encompasses everything, and that it is not *muṭlaq*.

In brief, it has been established that the divine commands to comply with prophets and not to comply with disbelievers are not *muṭlaq* that they could support neglectful attitude of the objectors towards Shariah, rather they encompass each and every ruling of Shariah. Thus, this compliance and non-compliance appear to be a composite whole that consists of several parts or elements, and it needs no mention that no composite – whether material or abstract – can come into existence without all of its constituents. If some of the constituents are removed, the composite whole will also diminish and will ultimately cease to exist.

Therefore, the survival of every composite lies in protecting its small constituents in the same manner as its major constituents are protected. Look at a beautiful person! In order to be called beautiful, all of his body parts need to be in appropriate form and perfect shape; bright skin tone, black hair, big eyes, moderate limbs, tall height, elegant way of walking, attractive way of talking, and sweet voice are some of the qualities that make him qualify as a beautiful

person. The bright skin tone will not make one beautiful when the eyes are small; the manner of talking will not make him attractive as long as the voice is harsh; the beauty of some components will not make up for flaws in the others.

If you apply the same concept to abstract beauty, you will find that a knowledgeable person deserves the title of 'Shariah scholar' only after he acquires profound knowledge of Quran, Sunnah, Islamic jurisprudence and its principles, Arabic literature, logic and so on. He cannot be given this title if he has knowledge of hadith but not of jurisprudence, or he is familiar with principles of jurisprudence but is oblivious of Quranic sciences.

Is it not strange that the pretty face of a pretty person looks ugly if there are some partial imperfections, and a knowledgeable person is stripped of the title of scholar if he is ignorant of few branches of knowledge, but the beautiful face of Allah's religion does not turn ugly when these so-called reformers manipulate its teachings and mutilate not only its secondary components but also primary ones?

These self-entitled intellectuals have ruined the face of Islam through baseless justifications, have altered its appearance through imitation of disbelievers, and have presented it to the world in new forms and shapes, and yet they expect their version of Islam to be considered the same as the absolutely perfect, flawless, and beautiful religion that it was in its inception, and they still expect to be known as devout and traditional Muslims. "Of course not! Rather, all (the filth) they have earned has rusted and encrusted their hearts." [Al-Muṭaffifīn: 14]

So, when a compound object which consists of several parts is demanded, the demand necessarily pertains to all of its parts, otherwise the demand of the compound would

be pointless. Thus, neither the requirement of such demander will be met without all the constituting parts nor will the person fulfilling the demand be absolved of his duty.

To illustrate, if we asked a bricklayer to build a house and he only built walls or arches and thought he has done the job, is he right in his thought? No, right? Because ‘house’ is a compound object which consists of walls, pillars, roofs, and arches. The wall alone or the arch alone is not called a house. Therefore, this compound will only come into existence when all of its components have been built, and a bricklayer’s job will not be finished until he has built all these things.

In the same manner, when the Almighty demands something from his slaves in a compound form, no matter if it concerns tangible things, religious practices, behavior, or moral values, the servants are required to carry it out entirely. If they carry out just one or two components and leave the rest deeming it unnecessary, their example will be like the bricklayer who was ordered to build a complete house but he only built some parts and thought he has done the job; They will not be absolved of the obligation.

The example of tangible things: The Holy Quran mandated Muslims to wash their faces when preparing for prayers: “When you rise up for prayer, wash your faces.” [Al-Māʼidah: 6] And ‘face’ is a tangible thing that consists of many components like forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks, and chin etc. The forehead alone or the cheeks alone cannot be called the ‘face’ Thus, if we washed only forehead or cheeks, or just sprinkled water on the nose, we cannot claim that we have washed our face, because the word ‘face’ is not applied to these individual components rather the composite whole

of all these components. It cannot be argued that face is *muṭlaq* and we will discharge our duty by observing this command in one or two components.

The example of religious practices: One of the practices mandated by Shariah is prayer. The Holy Quran said: "Establish prayer." [Al-Baqarah: 43] Prayer is a combined practice that is made of many actions and steps, like *qiyām* (standing upright), *rukū'* (bowing), *sujūd* (prostrating), and *jalsah* (sitting between the two prostrations). None of these steps alone constitute the prayer. If one ends his prayer immediately after *qiyām* or *rukū'*, or he ends the prayer consisting of two *rak'ats* after one *rak'at*, then these actions of him would not be known as prayer, because the prayer refers to the combination of all these actions and not the individual actions, and when all the actions were not carried out, the prayer remains incomplete. No one will say that the obligation to pray has been discharged by performing some of the actions as the word 'prayer' is a *muṭlaq*.

The example of behavior: If we tell someone to behave good with a person, this good behavior will be a combination of two things: Firstly, to do things that please him. Secondly, to refrain from things that displease him. So, if he acts kindly towards this person and offers him gifts, but at the same time assaults him, then it cannot be said that he has done what he was told to do. Giving gifts along with physical assault does not make it a good behavior, because one element of this combination is missing and the existence of this combination depends on the existence of both elements.

The example of moral values: The Prophet (PBUH) has ordered us to entertain the guest: "Anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain his guest

generously."[175] Entertaining the guest is a moral value which implies honoring the guest, caring for his comfort, and providing him sufficient to eat and drink. If we give him few bites and leave him hungry, this treatment will not be termed as entertaining the guest as we are executing the order only partially and, therefore, not discharging our duty.

Opposing disbelievers: In the same way, avoiding the imitation of disbelievers or outwardly and inwardly opposing them is a religious obligation that has been enjoined on us by various Shariah injunctions and prohibitory rules. This obligation is a composite whole that includes opposing the disbelievers in clothing, beautification, worships, customs and habits, social and political affairs. In short, it requires us to be different from unbelievers in each and every aspect. So, if we oppose them in some respect but imitate them in the rest, it would not be considered a full compliance to the command of Shariah or discharging our duty of being different from them. Since being different includes many things, we will not be different unless we maintain dissimilarity in all things at all times.

Just as in the previous examples we have seen that only washing the nose is not enough to fulfill the command of washing the face, only prostrating is not equal to complete prayer, giving gifts along with physical assault is not counted as good behavior, and feeding a guest few bites does not constitute entertaining the guest, rather the command is accomplished by bringing every component into practice. In the same way, we have to accept that complying with prophets and avoiding the imitation of unbelievers is an

(175) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 6018.

obligation that comprises a number of rules and regulations, and this obligation can only be fulfilled by observing all the rules and regulations and not just a few. It is a basic principle that any general law requires all of its constituting elements unless the Shariah itself puts a limit on its application.

In short, the objectors are misled by the idea that complying with prophets and opposing disbelievers is a *muṭlaq* command and observing just one or two components is sufficient even if the major part is ignored. I, on the other hand, believe that it is an *'ām* and, therefore, it is mandatory to fully adhere to it, and even one missing component will render the whole invalid. Thus, there is a stark difference between what I believe and what they claim.

The discussion so far was considering the concept of imitation as *'ām* instead of *muṭlaq*. However, even if we accept for a moment that it is *muṭlaq*, still it does not mean that observing this rule in one or two instances would be sufficient to discharge the duty. The reason is that we are not convinced that this notion is the kind of *muṭlaq* that demands partial fulfilment of the Shariah obligation, rather it is the kind of *muṭlaq* that demands perfect compliance to the way of prophets, and the perfect compliance to prophets is achieved when a Muslim adheres to their pattern until he begins to be identified as a staunch follower of prophets, and he dissociates himself from unbelievers in his appearance, behavior, and lifestyle so much so that he begins to be recognized with this trait. It goes without saying that this degree of compliance (which we have termed as perfect compliance) cannot be achieved by obeying the rules of Shariah in one or two instances and neglecting in the rest, rather it can only be accomplished by observing them in each

and every department of one's life. This degree of compliance is what Shariah demands, and the *muṭlaq* will be unfulfilled unless this degree is achieved.

To sum up, the freedom and autonomy that the objectors wanted to establish as part of religion on the pretext of *muṭlaq* could not be proven and it has become evident that a Muslim cannot be the obedient servant of Allah unless he avoids the imitation of disbelievers in all or most of his conduct.

In the end, I would like to conclude the discussion on the hadith of imitation with a subtle point: even though Sir Syed Ahmad Khan left no stone unturned trying to falsify the hadith "whoever imitates a people is one of them", he could not help himself but to allusively admit its authenticity. He tried all he could to run away from the reality, but the truth did not let him escape and forced him to admit the legality of the above hadith albeit unwillingly. After exerting himself in refuting the hadith and declaring it against logic, he tried to find a different explanation for the prophetic saying when he further stated:

> "The truth is that the hadith (which I will henceforth refer as a maxim since its status as prophetic saying is not verified in my view) has no other proper logical explanation except that it pertains to a catastrophic situation when a lot of people from different communities die and it becomes impossible to identify the dead of one community from that of others. It is in this situation that the maxim "whoever resembles a community is one of them" will

> come into play and the dead resembling to one community will be considered the member of that community and his last rites will be performed accordingly."(176)

The subtle point in this assertion is that it does not refute our stance but renders the claim of Syed Ahmad Khan contradictory to itself. By providing this explanation of the hadith, he has indirectly accepted what we had been saying – as we will prove it soon – thereby contradicting his own statement. So, he has falsified his own claim while substantiating our standpoint.

To elaborate, Syed Ahmad Khan is openly accepting that in a catastrophic situation when the dead of various communities are mixed together, it is impossible to perform last rites of a Muslim in the Islamic manner unless he carries some distinguishing sign that sets him apart from others.

Now, the question is: should the last rites of Muslim – that you are referring to – be performed in the traditional Islamic manner or not? If the answer is no, it means you are denying all the Islamic rituals that start from the time of death to the time of burial, such as reminding the dying person of two shahadas, closing his eyes after the departure of his soul, bathing him in a specific way, preparing the funeral, wrapping him in shroud, the specific number of shrouding cloths, the burial and the method of burial, the grave and the types of grave; as if everything is baseless for Syed Ahmad. It needs no mention that such outright denial of Islamic injunctions makes one a disbeliever and, as such,

(176) Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq, vol.4, page 41, year 1290 A.H.

there is no point in discussing the secondary rules of Shariah with such a person.

But if you deem it mandatory to perform the last rites of Muslim according to Islamic teachings, and you cannot see a Muslim deceased being burned like Hindus, being offered to scavenging birds and wild animals like Zoroastrians, or being entombed like Christians, then you are admitting that being different from disbelievers and avoiding their imitation is necessary for a Muslim, because performing Islamic rituals is obligatory in the event of catastrophic deaths, and this obligation can only be fulfilled when there is an outward distinction, and anything that is necessary for an obligation becomes obligatory in itself.

Thus, it is evident that maintaining the distinction and avoiding the imitation is also obligatory in such events and, by the grace of God, a denier like you has finally admitted the necessity of avoiding imitation at least in the event of mass deaths. Now that you have accepted its importance in the event of mass death, we would like to make it clear that you have no option left but to accept it in life before death, because the question that arises here is: were these distinguishing features (that made it possible to identify a Muslim after his death) meant only for his death or they were important during his lifetime as well? If you say that the distinct attire was donned to make him identifiable only after his death, it will be absolutely incorrect because no people in the world have ever chosen a dress just for death and neither does anyone know the definite time of his death so that he could prepare for it beforehand.

So, the answer is the second one, i.e., the distinguishing features were meant for the lifetime of the deceased and not for

his death. The deceased (who received Islamic funeral thanks to some Islamic sign found on his body) tried all his life to appear different from non-Muslims so that he could be treated as a Muslim after his death even when his corpse is mixed with the dead of other communities.

In short, the above statement of Syed Ahmad Khan proved the necessity of avoiding imitation not only after death but also in each and every moment during one's lifetime; the claim to prove which we had indulged into this long discussion and the claim which Syed Ahmad Khan had attempted to falsify through his writings. It is another thing that his pen turned against him towards the end and supported the opposite of what he had wanted.

Even if we accept that those deceased had known about their deaths beforehand, for example when there is a pandemic and the caretakers of a sick person abandon him fearing for their own lives and this person could foresee his fate and the upcoming state of confusion among the deceased of various communities, so he adopts Islamic appearance in order to die as Muslim and to be identified as Muslim after his death, then this also substantiates our standpoint and supports the necessity of avoiding the imitation; because the question is: why did they choose Islamic appearance right on the verge of death when they could not benefit from it? If they did it so that they are identified as Muslims after their death and they are not deprived of the Islamic funeral rites, then the same reason is applicable before their death as well; because when a Muslim imitates non-Muslims in his lifestyle, he is deprived of so many blessings of Islamic treatment and Islamic appearance.

If this deprivation is dangerous after death, it is more dangerous before death; because the life before death is a reflection and foundation for the life after death on which depends the hereafter of human being. If this life is Islamic, that life will also be Islamic. If a Muslim maintains distinction and distance from non-Muslims in his worldly life, his rank in the hereafter will also be distant and distinct from them, as a Hadith mentions: "You will die the way you live and you will be resurrected the way you die."(177)

Moreover, a person who hates resemblance of unbelievers so much so that he is worried about avoiding it even after his death, will such a person like to imitate the unbelievers during his life? Furthermore, it is strange that the ambition of believers is to avoid imitation even after their death so that they are not deprived of Islamic funeral, while the ambition of Syed Ahmad Khan is to legalize the same imitation in the lifetime so that believers become similar to unbelievers. "So how bold they are (for evil deeds which will push them) to the Fire. That is because Allah has sent down the Book in truth. And verily, those who disputed as regards the Book are far away in opposition." [Al-Baqarah: 175-176]

All in all, Syed Ahmad Khan may look for any explanation of the hadith that he wants, it will anyway convey the necessity of avoiding imitation and he will be unable to escape from this truth. It has already been established that the hadith is indeed meaningful and relevant and, therefore, it will certainly highlight the significance of refraining from the semblance of non-Muslims at any rate.

So, all the arguments of Sir Syed against the hadith 'whoever imitates a people is one of them' that were initially

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(177) Isma'īl Ḥaqqī, *Tafsīr Ruḥ al-Bayān*, vol.4, p121.

refuting the idea of imitation have started to substantiate it towards the end, and there is no doubt that such contradicting arguments whose initial part proves something and the latter part proves its opposite stand no chance of invalidating the hadith.

Anyway, it is now evident that this hadith constitutes such a perfect logical, moral, natural, and religious law that absurd attacks of deniers can have no effect on its significance. It has also come to light that the illicit objections raised against it were nothing but pure lies and deceptions that have been exposed now and it has become crystal clear that the hadith neither has broken chain of narration nor weak narrators, neither it is inexplicable nor does it lack meaningfulness, neither are there any contradicting traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) nor conflicting practices of his companions, neither does it lead to kufr nor is it a *muṭlaq* that is required to be observed in one or two instances, and it is not only applicable to the confusing state created by mass deaths either. Instead, it is such a clear, meaningful, consistent, encompassing, and complete principle that is neither subjected to anyone's imagination nor affected by anyone's denial. It is a law established by the everlasting and unchangeable words of God that have no possibility of alteration, distortion, or invalidation.

> "No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise." [Fuṣṣilāt: 42]

In summary, the well-known leader and reformer, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, has penned a long essay trying to falsify the hadith of imitation both on the basis of narration and

reason, but his words possess no more importance than mere imagination and far-fetched assumption in contrast to the informed opinions and assertions of the scholars of Islam. Had he posed any substantial objection, we could have taken it on us to elaborate it further, but currently these few lines are sufficient to deflate his weak arguments and expose his fragile claims.

At last, I am unable to stop myself from wondering that Sir Syed has brought so much breadth to the topic of imitation through his innovative explanation in order not to upset Jews, Christians, Hindus, Zoroastrians or any other religious group, but the true scholars of Islam have narrowed it so much that they could not even please the innovators let alone disbelievers. It is because they believe in what Imām al-Ghazālī has quoted: "If a Sunnah becomes distinctive sign of the innovators, we will instruct to abandon that Sunnah so as to avoid resembling the innovators."(178)

Because their foresight was telling them that practicing Sunnah is voluntary but protecting the boundaries of religion is obligatory. That is why they instructed to abandon the Sunnah which had become the distinctive sign of innovators, and they ensured that the followers of Sunnah remain distinguishable from the followers of bid'ah thereby curbing the disease of imitation.

On the one side, the above quotation of al-Ghazālī highlights the extremely careful attitude of our predecessors who even avoided the imitation of innovators and considered it a deadly disease, and on the other, it brings to light the

(178) Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' Ūlūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 2:272.

heedlessness of Sir Syed who does not even hesitate to appear like a non-Muslim or care about its devastating effects.

If the wise predecessors were not so careful about preserving their religious distinctions, the religion of Islam would not have reached us in its original form, and whatever could reach us would have been altered and distorted by the stupid successors. In that case, Islam would have met the same fate as other religions of the world did. But Allah is indeed the protector of His own religion, and it is by His planning that every enemy of Islam eventually gets caught in his own trap.

Section Three: The Hadith 'There is No Monasticism in Islam' and its Actual Meaning

In the previous section, I have countered the objections raised by the opponents against our evidences supporting the concept of imitation. In this section, I am going to deal with a Prophetic tradition through which the opponent has tried to prove that the issue of imitation is not a matter of concern of Shariah, rather the Shariah has rejected it. Their arguments can be summarized as the following:

> "The principle of avoiding imitation leads to fanaticism and narrow-mindedness. It is also against the universal and encompassing nature of Islam; It makes life difficult by putting restrictions on everything; It deprives Muslims of the benefits of new and innovative products; It makes it impossible to borrow better and useful ideas from other communities; And all these factors

> contribute to halting the progress of Muslim society. In fact, very few people can afford to adhere by this monastic principle and lead their lives under such restrictions, whereas Islam is free from such narrowness and narrow-mindedness. It was Islam that propagated easy and simple way of living as opposed to monkhood and monasticism when it proclaimed "There is no (room for) monasticism in Islam"(179)
>
> But Muslim scholars promote an impractical and monastic lifestyle in the guise of avoiding the imitation. They want to lead the Muslim society to narrow-mindedness, regressive thinking, and conservative attitude instead of liberty of thought, progressive mindset, and modern thinking. This shortsightedness of so-called Islamic scholars has resulted in driving people away from Islam and has turned Shariah into the property of few."

This hadith is the biggest weapon and the strongest evidence for the deniers of the principle of imitation. They think that this hadith contradicts the hadith of imitation, and all sorts of objections discussed earlier are actually extrapolation of this hadith. But for me, it is astonishing that these objectors who have accused the scholars of Islam of being fanatic and narrow-minded could not see hundreds of

(179) Abū Muḥammad Ḥusayn bin Muḥammad bin al-Farrā' al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-Sunnah*, edited by: Shu'ayb al-Arnawūṭ and Muḥammad Zuhair (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1983), 2:371.

Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions that highlight the significance of the issue of imitation and which we have provided with details in the first chapter of this book.

The evidences that advocate the prohibition of imitation are not personal opinions of scholars rather the traditions of the Prophet that have come down to us through proper channels without any addition and subtraction. And since the strict teachings about imitation are not innovation of religious scholars, the accusation of narrow-mindedness does not fall on the scholars, but on the traditions of the Prophet or on the Prophet (PBUH) himself.

Moreover, the concept of imitation is supported by logical, physical, as well as natural laws, as we have proved earlier. So, the same accusation should come back to these denier as they are the biggest proponents of these laws. Thus, if the religion is narrow-minded, the religious scholars are narrow-minded, and the logical and natural laws are narrow-minded, then these objectors must also be narrow-minded. So, why should we alone be responsible to answer?

Actually, every person should realize his boundaries within which he is entitled to speak, and everyone must express his opinion within his area of expertise. The issue of imitation is not a political, social, or financial matter. It is clearly and plainly a religious matter that was introduced by the Prophet (PBUH) himself. So, only religious learned men and scholars who have spent their lives in acquiring the knowledge of Quran and Sunnah have the right to speak on this matter and not members of assemblies or professors of colleges and universities.

It is strange that they are denying the concept of imitation because of this hadith when the wording of the hadith is not only highlighting the significance of this issue

but is also a very strong proof of the same. In fact, we are grateful for these individuals who have actually helped us prove this concept by directing our attention to this hadith through citing it as part of their objection.

It is obvious to all that the message of the hadith is that Islam has no room for excessive indulgence in religion. But one must also ponder the words used in it; instead of directly saying "do not indulge excessively in religion", it said "there is no monasticism in Islam", although the first statement was more direct and clearer to convey the meaning.

The reason is that the Prophet of Allah had wanted to point out the actual cause of this evil, i.e., imitation, as monasticism is related to monks which is a term used specially for Christian ascetics. Therefore, monasticism translates to being like Christian monks or adopting the lifestyle of Christian monks. This is why the Prophet (PBUH) did not say that Islam does not allow extremism, rather he said that Islam does not allow becoming like monks or acting like monks, and it is obvious that being like monks is tantamount to imitating them.

In other words, the message of the hadith is that Islam does not allow imitation of monks. And when imitation of monks – who are the religious class among Christians – is impermissible, how can imitation of common Christians be permissible? Therefore, the reason for the ruling of Islam mentioned in the above hadith is that Islam does not permit excess and exaggeration even in religion, because by doing so, Muslims will resemble Christian monks and priests who exaggerate in religious devotion. Since imitation is disallowed, such exaggeration and excess will also be impermissible.

So, the hadith first prohibited from excessiveness in religion and then it highlighted the reason behind this prohibition, i.e., imitation, thereby making it clear that the reason is not only the imitation of monks but also the imitation of Christians in general. Thus, what these liberals and the standard-bearers of free-thinking wanted to prove through this hadith could not be proven, and what this hadith has proved is not refuting the concept of imitation but is substantiating it even further.

Finally, the opponent has totally failed to establish his claim through the hadith "there is no monasticism in Islam" just as he failed to disprove the hadith "whoever imitates a people is one of them", and the issue of imitation has come out clear as day with no logical objection attacking its authenticity and no well-founded doubt targeting its legality. And this is how a Shariah injunction ought to be; irrefutable and inviolable, but its deniers are wretched and doomed.

Section Four: The Foundation of the Concept of Imitation and Final Answer to Doubts Pertaining to this Issue.

After discussing the issue of imitation from both logical and scriptural perspectives, it is also essential to know that the most basic foundation of this issue is an impeccable heart and the purest sentiment of love and devotion.

It is this amazing sentiment of love that easily and successfully leaves its impression on human heart when all other laws and constitutions of the world and all other ethical and rational factors fail to affect the heart or inspire the mind.

Once love takes root in someone's heart, he goes through the following stages:

1- The lover sacrifices all his senses, sentiments, wishes, choices, and interests for the sake of his beloved. He loses his choice and will. He abandons his freedom and becomes a slave of his beloved. He even gives up his thought of self and opinion of self.
2- Then, all the sentiments and interests of the lover are lost in the wills and wishes of the beloved. The lover's mind gets fully occupied by the beloved and all of his actions begin to be performed at the whim of the beloved instead of the whim of his self, and he ends up surrendering his life and death to the beloved.
3- Then at the peak of this love and fondness, the lover begins to admire not only the persona of the beloved but also each and everything that is attributed to him, has relation with him, or is performed by him. He becomes a fan of all of his habits, actions, and behavior.
4- Then once this true sentiment of love takes hold, there is nothing in this world that could deviate the lover from this path. Neither a sincere advice can put off this sentiment nor any admonition can distract him, rather every advice and admonition end up fueling the fire of his love and making him want the beloved even more desperately.

These stages of love wherein the lover first gives up his sense of self, then surrenders his freewill, and then forgets everyone and everything except his beloved are about the materialistic kind of love which is temporary and short-lived; wherein the lover and the beloved both are ephemeral.

So, you can imagine when a person falls in love with someone who himself is eternal; whose beauty is everlasting; and whose stages of affection are endless, will this true love not have the same impact on the lover's heart as the temporary love does? It will definitely do, and this condition will be permanent unlike the temporary love.

When a Muslim claims to be a believer, he actually claims that he loves the One True God and His final Messenger more than himself, his parents, his offspring, and everyone else in his life; because Imān (faith) is not a legal contract or a verbal declaration, rather it is an expression of pure love; the kind of love in which there is no room for anyone else.

About loving the Messenger of Allah, there is a hadith that says: "None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind."(180)

And about loving Allah, the Holy Quran mentions: "Those who believe are most firm in their love for Allah." [Al-Baqarah: 165]

Sacrificing one's ego

When the love for God and His Messenger fills a believer's heart, the first thing that occurs is that the believer sacrifices his ego and his sense of self. He gives up his choice and freewill and becomes obedient to the commands of God and His Messenger. This spirit of self-sacrifice has been hinted at in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

> "It is not open for a believing man or a believing woman, once Allah and His messenger have decided a thing, that they should have a choice about their matter; and

(180) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith no. 15.

> whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger, he indeed gets off the track, falling into an open error." [Al-Aḥzāb: 36]

This noble verse has addressed the obedient men and women as believing men and believing women and then mentioned that they have no choice in their matters after Allah and His Messenger have decreed a command, to show that faith is nothing but pure love, and true love does not leave a freedom of choice for the lover. Further, the verse has referred to egotism as disobedience to make it clear that having personal opinions after Allah has commanded something points at the weakness of faith and the lack of love.

Surrender and Submission

The second change that occurs to a believer and lover of God is that he surrenders his will and choice to the will and choice of God. To please God becomes the sole aim of his life; whatever he does, he does it to please Him; and whatever he gives up, he gives up to please Him. He surrenders his whole life and even death to his beloved God. In short, his love becomes characterized by absolute submission and total surrender, and this is exactly what the word 'Islam' actually denotes.

This spirit of total submission is what the Almighty demanded from his prophet, Ibrāhīm (PBUH) when He ordered him to "Be a Muslim!" [Al-Baqarah: 131] and a declaration of the same was demanded from Ibrāhīm (PBUH) in the following words: "Say, "Surely my prayer, and my rites, and my living, and my dying are for Allah, The Lord of the worlds. No associate has He; and this I am commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims." (Literally: of the ones who have surrendered to Allah). [Al-An'ām: 162-163]

Then, the same spirit of surrender and submission was articulated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the following words: “If anyone loves for Allah's sake, hates for Allah's sake, gives for Allah's sake and withholds for Allah's sake, he will have perfect faith.”[181]

And this is the stage of love that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) has prayed for: “O Allah, protect me with Islam while standing, protect me with Islam while sitting, protect me with Islam while lying down.[182]

And the same he has prayed for in different words at another occasion: “O Allah! I am weak [in pleasing you] so grant me strength, lead me to good, make Islam the pinnacle of my joy.”[183]

In brief, the castle of love relies on two pillars: Firstly, on shunning everything other than the beloved to the extent of sacrificing one’s own self. Secondly, on immersing in the love of the beloved to the extent that one sees him and only him in everything that he looks at.

Shunning everything for the love of God

Once the urge to shun everything other than God takes root in a believer’s heart, he begins to forget everything and everyone else. In other words, the believing heart tends to loathe and detest everything that has no relation with God. So, no godless person, godless way of life, godless semblance, godless behavior, or anything that is associated with godless people can find an affectionate place in the believer’s heart. It is this spirit of abstinence that many verses of the Holy Quran preach, such

(181) Abu Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Hadith no. 4681.

(182) al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol.1, p706, Hadith number: 1924.

(183) Ibid, Hadith number: 1931.

as: “And do not be inclined to the wrongdoers or you will be touched by the Fire.” [Hūd: 113]

Since Satan and his descendants are the biggest wrongdoers and the foremost in godlessness, the Glorious Quran said: “Then will you take him and his descendants as allies other than Me while they are enemies to you? Wretched it is for the wrongdoers as an exchange.” [Al-Kahf: 50]

It is about this spirit of forsaking every godless thing that Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī related from Mālik bin Dīnār that Allah revealed to one of his prophets: “Tell your people not to visit the places of my enemies, not to wear the clothes of my enemies, and not to eat the food of my enemies lest they become my enemies just like them.”(184)

The last line of this revelation ‘lest they become my enemies just like them’ is similar to the Quran prohibiting Muslims from sitting with disbelievers who make fun of the Book of Allah and then warning them saying: “Or else you will be like them.” [An-Nisā’: 140], or the Quran prohibiting Muslims from taking disbelievers as allies and then cautioning them: “And whoever of you allies himself with them becomes, verily, one of them.” [Al-Mā’idah: 51], or the Prophet (PBUH) prohibiting Muslims from imitating disbelievers and then saying: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.”

Immersion in the love

But when the second condition takes over, i.e., when the lover gets fully immersed in the love and the beloved, then he begins to adore not only the beloved but also everything associated with

(184) Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *Al-Zawājir 'an Iqtirāf al-Kabā’ir* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1987), 1:23.

him, be it his characteristics, his habits, and his actions. So, soon as the believer's heart loses itself in the love for God and the love for Prophet (PBUH), he tends to start admiring everything that is associated with them, whether they are godly people, godly actions, godly knowledge, godly qualities, godly appearance, or godly rituals.

This immersion in love is what the Prophet (PBUH) has asked for in one of his supplications: "O Allah, indeed, I ask You for Your love and the love of those who love You, and for the action that will cause me to attain Your love, O Allah, make Your love more beloved to me than myself, my family and cold water."(185)

Since Imān (belief) is the prerequisite to attain the love of Allah, the Prophet (PBUH) also prayed for it: "O Allah, make us love belief and adorn our hearts with it."(186)

Or, since death is the medium to reach Allah, the Prophet (PBUH) asked Allah to make him love the death as well: "O Allah, make everyone who recognizes me as your messenger love the death."(187)

These two stages of love constitute the foundation of the concept of imitation. That is to say, the stage of immersion in love lays the foundation for imitation of the pious while the stage of shunning everything other than the beloved forms the basis of avoiding the imitation of disbelievers. In other words, whenever one's love for God and godly people increases, his love for everything associated with them will also increase and he will naturally like to adopt their appearance and their style. Similarly, whenever one's urge to forsake others gets stronger,

(185) At-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' at-Tirmidhī*, Hadith no. 3490.
(186) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Hadith no. 15492.
(187) Abu al-Qāsim Sulaymān Ibn Aḥmad at-Ṭabarāni, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr* (Cairo: Maktaba Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.), no. 3457.

his dislike and disinterest in the semblance and lifestyle of others will also grow. No matter how attractive and charming other ways of living are, the true lover of Allah can never be fascinated by their superficial glamour or be distracted by criticism of the followers of desire. Nevertheless, if one's love is shallow or his claim of love is false, then it is very much possible for him to be allured by other lifestyles rather than the Islamic way of living.

All in all, my intention behind highlighting these two stages of love was to show that the issue of imitation or avoiding imitation, in other words, the urge to imitate the pious Muslims and to refrain from the imitation of non-Muslims is a natural urge of the believer's heart and not the result of some pretense, fanaticism, or narrow-mindedness.

Therefore, anyone who claims to be a believer has no right to invent or adopt a practice, way of worship, or lifestyle blindly adhering to his own desire or other communities, or else his belief and his claim of love will be questionable. It is because shunning one's own choices and abandoning the path of others is the first step towards loving God, and when he could not properly take the very first step, how can he be entitled to be called a believer?

Now, the westernized modern Muslims of India who get fascinated by everything that comes from Europe need to reflect upon what they are doing; do they have any excuse to justify their adherence of Europe or are they just blindly following the masses? They need to realize that if – God forbid – they are hiding the love and admiration for Western civilization instead of the Islamic custsoms, then they should give up the claim of being Muslims as long as they do not change their condition, purify their hearts, and then reenter Islam; for one heart cannot contain both love and disdain for the

faith. "Allah does not place two hearts in any person's chest." [Al-Aḥzāb: 4]

If they have adopted Western culture not out of admiration but due to personally liking it, then they must know that this is nothing but following their own whim and fancy, whereas they – as Muslims – were supposed to be obedient devotees of Allah instead of the followers of their own desires.

And if they have no personal inclination towards this materialistic civilization but they have adopted it due to peer pressure or the fear of criticism, then they must understand that the love of Allah and His Prophet could not take root in their hearts. Otherwise, is it possible for a true lover to abandon the path of his beloved due to someone's pressure or fear of criticism? Never! In fact, this mistake was committed by Abū Ṭālib who did not embrace Islam out of the fear of people criticizing him despite knowing that it is the true religion, and his only answer whenever the Prophet (PBUH) invited him to Islam was:

> "You have come with a religion that I know is the best religion on the surface of the earth. If I was not afraid of people criticizing and condemning me, you would have found me an open advocate of this religion."

Is there anyone who calls Abū Ṭālib a true believer and lover? The custom of the lovers is that they do not care even a bit about people's condemnation and criticism when it comes to their beloved. Once Ḥudhayfah bin al-Yamān was eating food and a morsel fell on the floor. He picked it up, cleaned it, and put it in his mouth. One of his servants who was observing this advised him against it saying that the Persians consider it a morally bad practice and they look

down upon the one who picks up fallen food. To which Ḥudhayfah replied: "should I leave the Sunnah of my beloved for the sake of these fools?"

So, leaving the truth due to people's fear is the tradition of Abū Ṭālib, while holding onto the truth despite all round criticism is the tradition of Ḥudhayfah bin al-Yamān, and it is needless to say that Ḥudhayfah's tradition should be dearer to a Muslim compared to the tradition of Abū Ṭālib.

And if modern Muslims have adopted the semblance of Christians thinking that they are imitating the most powerful and dominant nation who is currently ruling the world, then they should remember that no rule is more powerful or sovereign than prophethood. This sovereignty comes from the heaven and all the worldly rulers find no way but to surrender to its rule. When this kingdom of prophethood appeared fourteen centuries ago in all of its simplistic glory and unsophisticated beauty, its slightest movement changed the map of the world; the crown of Persia was turned upside down, the ever-growing dominance of Caesar was halted, and all the superpowers that dared to challenge it were brought to their knees.

Now, is there a justification for anyone who claims to love the Prophet (PBUH) to bow down to any other sovereign power? Never! It is equivalent to inclining to others, whereas the first condition of love is to remove even the possibility of inclination much less blindly following them.

And if they are following the footsteps of other nations because they are looking for some materialistic gains, worldly benefits, and superficial beauty, then they must take note that not every beneficial thing is lawful. Wine and gambling also have some benefits which are even acknowledged by the Quran, but they are forbidden. In fact,

nothing in this world is purely harmful; every harmful thing contains some benefits, and yet the Holy Quran has forbidden a lot of things because their harmful effects – specially the spiritual harms – outweighed their benefits. Hence, being beneficial does not imply that it will be lawful.

As far as the beautification is concerned, first of all a lover should not have anything to do with adornment and beautification. A true lover is supposed to be unmindful of his physical appearance. And even if he is determined to adorn his appearance, he is ought to adopt the appearance of his beloved and not of others, much less of his enemies.

In summary, after the claims of love and belief, these lame justifications hardly make any sense and amount to false excuses instead. The truth is that deception and corruption have surrounded the world, hearts have gone astray, hatred for Islam and Islamic values has become deep rooted, Islamic lifestyle has become alien, and as a result, the majority has been deprived of the blessed Islamic path.

These excuses are nothing but a cover-up for this deprivation. Otherwise, if the fire of true love was lit inside the hearts, such excuses would not have been needed neither was any outside guidance required. The hearts themselves would have become the guide and would have erased these false and absurd justifications. But when heedlessness and negligence take over and deviate the heart from the path of practice, then there are thousands of excuses to seek.

O Allah, we seek your refuge from heartlessness, heedlessness, poverty, disgrace, and misery.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

The book in hand is one of the most important works of Ḥakīm al-Islām Maulānā Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib Qāsmī which discusses one of the most important principles of Islamic Shariah, namely the 'imitation of disbelievers'.

The imitation of disbelievers in their beliefs, practices, and behavior is among the major reasons of the downfall of the Muslim Ummah, and most people do not even realize how serious and harmful this malpractice can be. On the one hand, it has removed the aversion to disbelief and practices of disbelievers from the hearts of common Muslims, and on the other, it has made non-Islamic culture and civilization dearer to Muslim minds thereby weakening their relation with Islam. What is more surprising is the fact that many advocates of this malpractice can be found among Muslims who have tried their best to render the Islamic injunctions concerning the issue of imitation as weak, useless, and impractical.

In addition to explaining the stance of Shariah on this matter, Ḥakīm al-Islām has successfully countered and refuted the arguments, objections, and doubts that are often raised against the principle of 'prohibition of imitation'. This book, therefore, has become a reference point and a must-have for every teacher, reformer, and preacher of Islam who seeks to bring back the Muslim Ummah to the original path of Islam and to remodel them on the perfect ideal of Ṣaḥābā and Tābi'ūn.

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